

Greetings,

This is your MOW Team update for April 16, 2017. Your MOW Team kept busy this week doing what it does best: building a better railroad. So, let's get this update started so you'll be up to date with all the latest MOW Team news.

The Weed Team's, Mike Taylor, was very busy on Tuesday. He spent the day all over the SSRR tracks – both on the Mainline and at Hood to review herbicide effectiveness issues. Alas, as a result of the excessive rains this year, green is breaking out in the most discouraging places. Mike T., therefore has decided that the Weedies will be revising the use of a couple herbicides to be a bit more aggressive. The Weedies are the unsung heroes of the Railroad. Many thanks to Mike T. and his Team for keeping our Railroad green-free!

Tuesday, Alan Hardy and Chris Carlson had an outstanding meeting with the Museum's new Director, Ty Smith. Amongst other things, they discussed the MOW Team's long-range plans and goals as well as our more immediate plan to commence work on the Sutterville Line to the Zoo. Ty was very supportive and indicated his intention to join us out on the line sometime soon. We'll look forward to it! Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Alan Hardy, Chris Carlson, Weston Snyder, Mike Harris, Frank Werry, Harry Voss, Matt McCracken, Heather Kearns, and Gene Peck welcomed the third Blackburn to the MOW Team. Yep, Kyle is now a bona-fide member of the MOW Team joining his dad, Taka, and brother, Matt. Welcome aboard Kyle! Pat and Mike T. worked on replacing the clutch on one of the field and brush mowers. Chris and Weston finished up work on reassembling and plumbing the tie-shear. Mike H. and Frank helped by adding hydraulic fluid to the machine. Chris fired it up and exclaimed, "It's alive!" Outside the Boiler Shop, Frank, Matt, Weston, and Kyle continued the reassembly of the Switch 19 frog. Last Saturday, the Team started putting it back together by installing the newly milled wing-rails. But, things just weren't fitting together properly. So, Tuesday, the Team replaced several bolts and then shimmed and cajoled the rails as they tightened down the new nuts. But still, gaps between the rails and the frog structure were not closing. So, Chris took some precision measurements comparing the old cracked rail and the newly milled rail. It appears the new rail is a bit wide in some places contributing to the problem. This coming week, the Team will take the frog apart again and conjure-up a plan on how best to proceed. But, fear now, we will figure it out and return this frog to service.

Ed Kottal, Heather, Kyle, Joe Margucci, Jose Gomez, Mike H., Weston, Frank, Matt, and Chris made up the MOW Team on Thursday. The plywood panels at each end of the turntable – where crewmembers must kneel to slide the track locks (dogs) that lock the turntable into position – were sagging and needed to be replaced before they broke. Mike H. and Kyle headed over to Old Sac. to take the appropriate measurements and collect a new sheet of plywood which could be cut to size and used to replace the old panels. Chris and Mike H. then worked on fixing a few hydraulic issues with the spiker. As five of the six new student brakemen on the SSRR are MOW Team members. So, Frank and Heather decided to give Weston, Jose, Joe, and Ed, a little primer on basic brakeman work so that they wouldn't head out onto the line cold on their first days as student brakemen. Frank put together a class outline which he and Heather followed as they discussed the key procedures, techniques, and rules brakemen need to know. Then they headed into the Shops for a little hands-on practice with angle-cocks, air hoses, draw-bars, and couplers. Joe, Ed, Jose, and Weston agreed that this class was valuable and will be quite helpful to as they start their field training. Many thanks to Frank and Heather for their dedication to the future of the SSRR!

It sure was a good thing that there were plenty of doughnuts on hand Saturday morning to fuel Ed, Harry, Frank, Michael Florentine, Heather, and John Rexroth as they had their work cut out for them. Again this week, the Team would head down to Setzer to tear a volcanic sized crater into "Mount Tie Helens." A new dumpster was delivered earlier in the week for disposing of dead ties. Mike F. took out Green Machine 2 (GM2) while Harry handled the back-hoe. At Setzer, Frank, John, Ed, and Heather pulled and lifted, pushed and moved ties and tie pieces into the back-hoe's bucket. Mike F. was able to scoop up eight or 10 ties at a time with GM2's forks and lifted them over the dumpster's walls. Ed was our Load Master and climbed in the dumpster after Harry and Mike F. dropped each load to rearrange the mangled mess to an orderly fashion to maximize space. John, Frank, and Heather found creative ways to drag-out several old bridge timbers from the turntable rebuild in 2013. We often say that there's no need to join a gym when you volunteer with MOW. That adage was proven on Saturday as the Team handled literally tons of ties. By lunch time, the Team had the dumpster filled to the brim with neatly arranged dead ties and tie pieces. The crater in Mount Tie Helens had grown substantially. With two more dumpsters on order, the Team will soon eradicate the entire dead tie pile.

Following lunch, Matt joined the Team for some afternoon MOW fun. John and Heather deployed the gas-powered chainsaw-on-a-stick and took on several trees in Old Sacramento with overhanging branches fouling the Old Main, Track 3 into the Central Pacific Passenger Station, and up on the 150 Track. Ed and Matt headed over to the turntable and removed the old plywood panels at each end which shattered as they pulled them out. They cut two new panels out of the new sheet of plywood based on measurements taken by Mike H. and Kyle on Thursday. Then, they secured them to the ties with heavy-duty screws. The old quarter-inch thick plywood panels were replaced with plywood that's half-inch thick. Now, brakemen will have a much firmer and stable platform from which they can pull the track-locks more safely when operating the turntable. By now, the Team was sore and tired so, headed back to the Shops very pleased with the amount of work they got done.

This coming week, the MOW Team will enjoy more MOW fun on Tuesday and Thursday evenings starting at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. Thursday, the Mighty Weed Team will be working on the SSRR Mainline throughout the day. Meet at the Shops starting at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, the MOW Team will be back out on the line what it does best: building a better railroad. Doughnut hour starts at 8 o'clock a.m. Many thanks to everyone – our supporters as well as all the dedicated folks who undertake the heavy labor of keeping this railroad rolling!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Weston, Mike H., and Frank add hydraulic fluid to the tie-shear...



...And use extraordinary measures to get every last drop



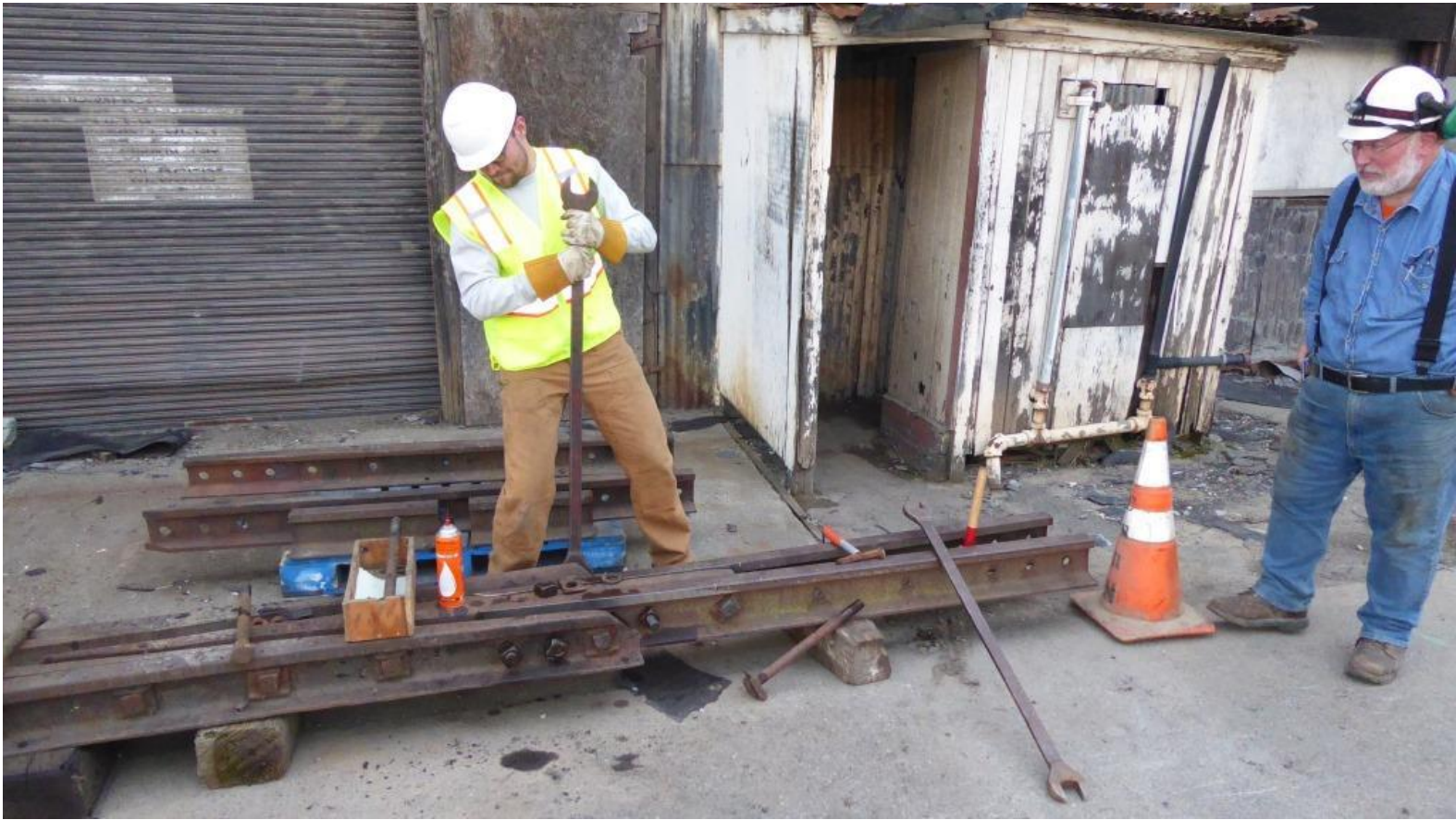


First Matt and Frank try to close the gaps between the frog and wing-rails by tightening bolts...

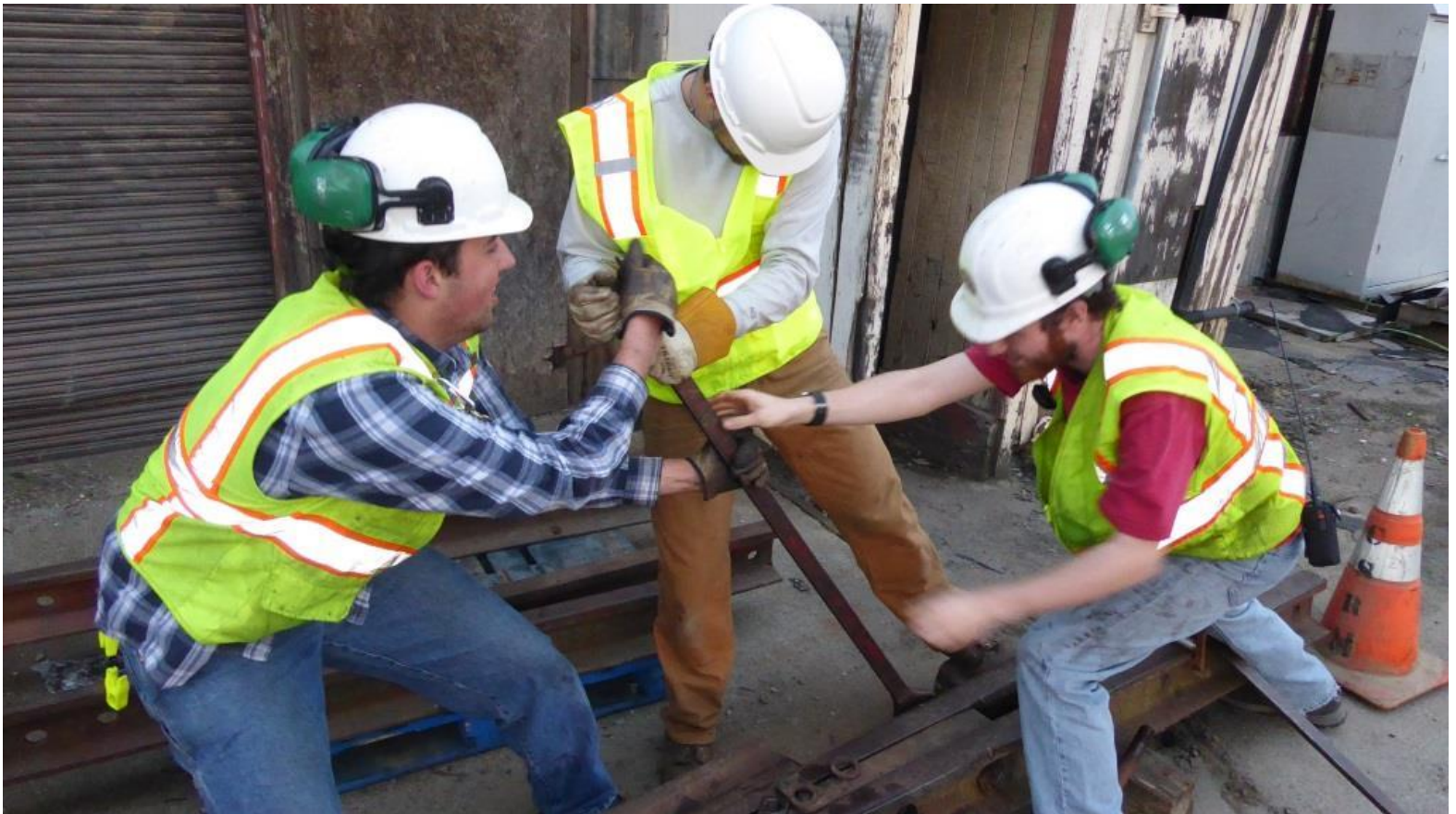


...Then Chris takes a stab at it...





...Now Kyle tries...

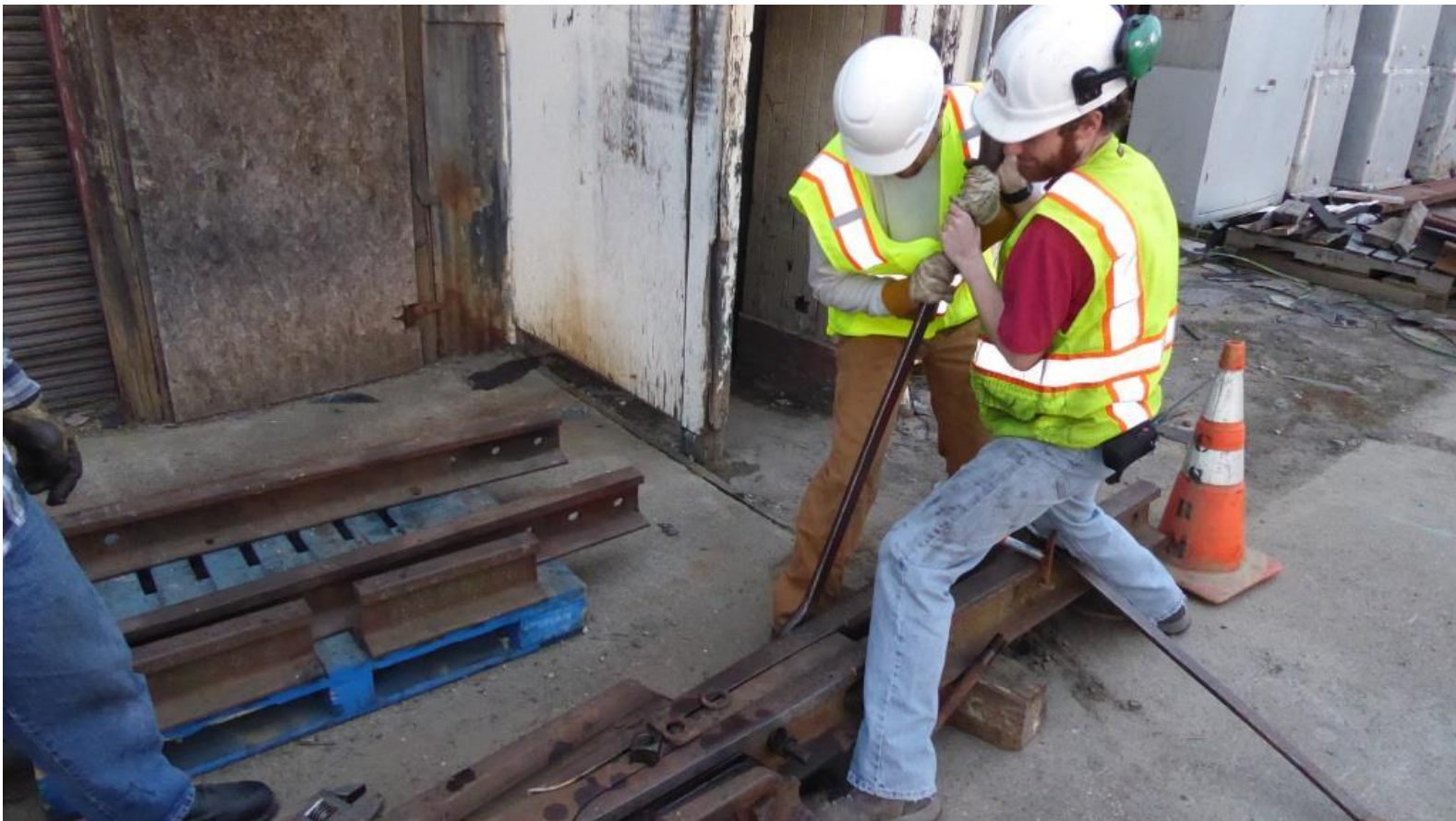


...Followed by an attempt at triple-headed power from Weston, Kyle, and Matt...





...Then Weston gave it a few whacks with the whacker to try to shift it into position...



...Before Kyle and Matt tried one more time





Student brakemen Joe, Ed, Weston, and Jose listen intently to Frank and Heather as they teach the finer points of being a brakeman



Saturday at Setzer, Heather helps Mike F. on GM2 steady the load





Mike F. dumps dead ties into the dumpster



Harry brings in the back-hoe as Frank loads tie pieces into the bucket





Mike F. digs into the side of Mount Tie Helens with the forks of GM2 as John attaches a chain to a bridge timber from the turntable

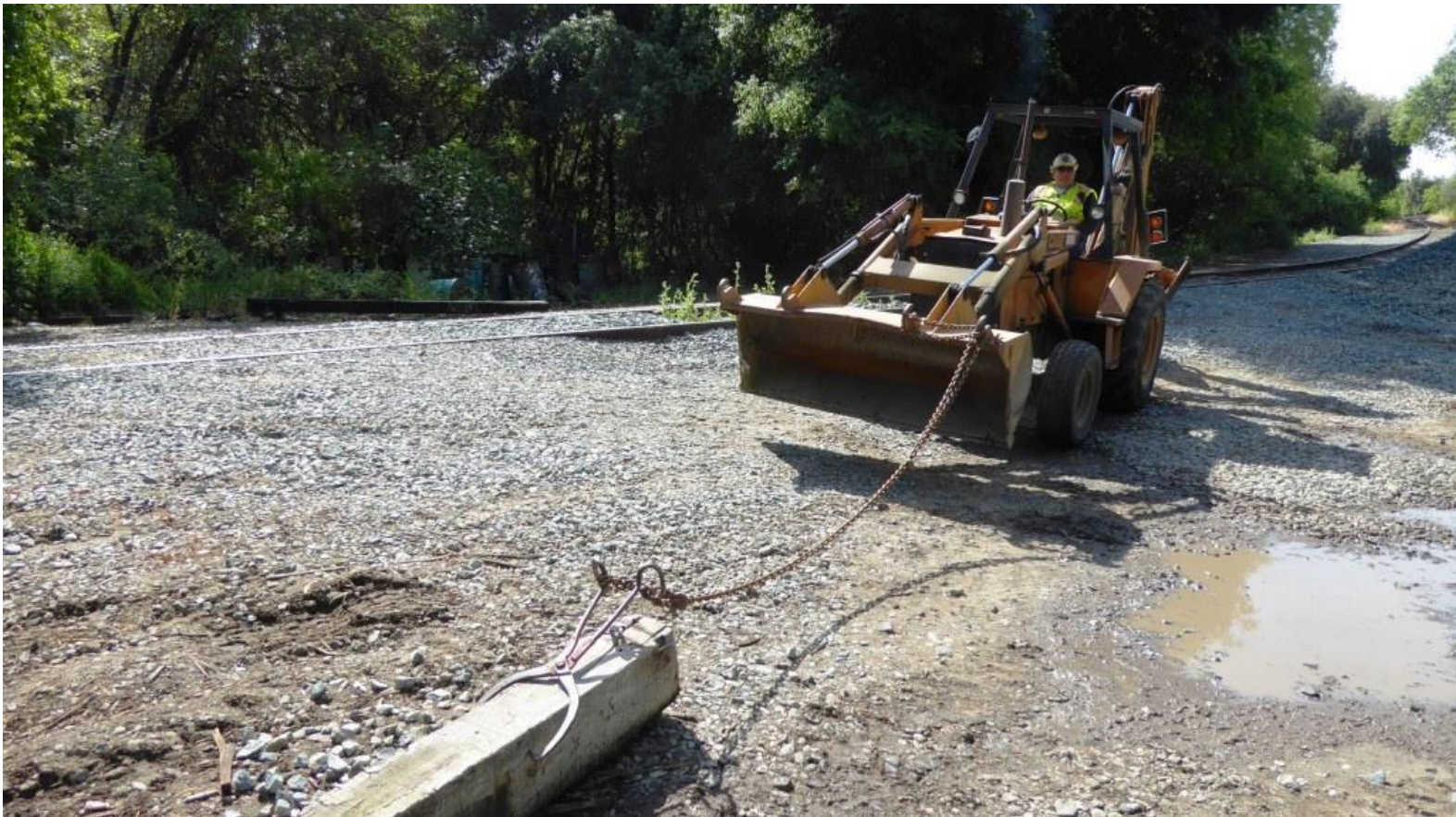


Ed gives directions to Harry as he gets ready to scoop-up some tie pieces





The ties would "jack-straw" as they were dumped in the dumpster so, Load Master Ed brings order to chaos



Harry pulls an old turntable bridge-timber out of the pile using tie-tongs attached with a chain to the back-hoe





The choreography of the back-hoe and GM2 as they worked around each other was like watching the "Dance of the Sugarplum Fairies"



Harry used the extend-a-hoe on the back-hoe to dig into the tie pile and pull some of the big ones off the top





The dumpster is filling up!



First train of the day rolls past our work-site





GM2 drops a load of dead-ties into the dumpster



The diminished Mount Tie Helens





John uses the gas-powered chainsaw-on-a-stick to remove offending branches over the 150 Track

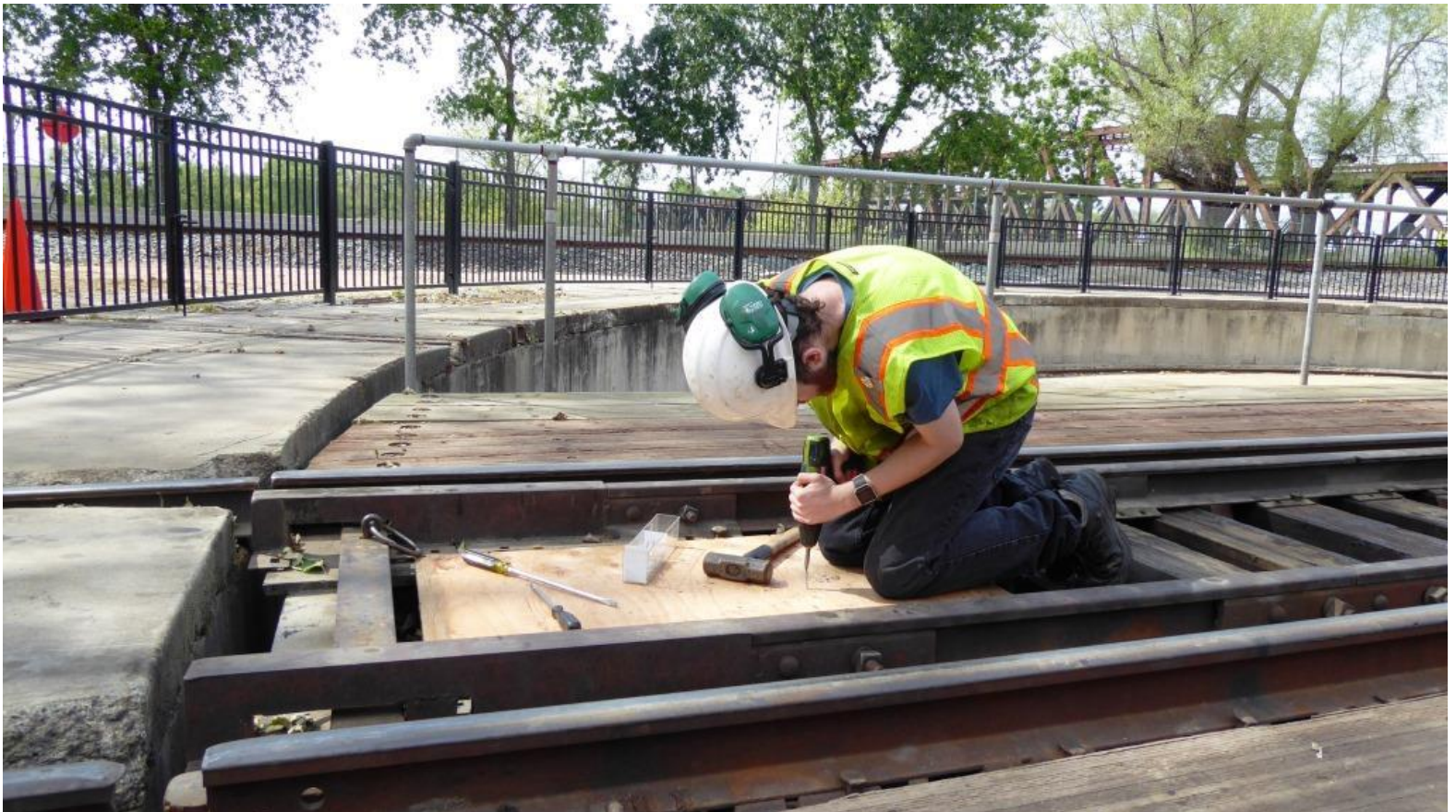


Heather provides John with guidance as to which branches to cut





Ed secures the new panel to the ties of the turntable



And now it's Matt's turn