

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for April 26, 2015. It was a week of challenges and learning experiences. But, as always, the volunteers of the MOW Team came through to make it a successful week. So, let's not add challenges by delaying this update any further.

Our resident ornithologists, a.k.a. the Weed Team, gathered at Hood on Tuesday. Mike Taylor, Joe Galipeau, Heather Kearns, and Dave Megeath found a bird nest while mowing the "driveway" from the SMUD substation at Hood to the container. Mike T. found the nest – likely a Red-winged Blackbird nest – as he worked ahead cutting mustard to make it easier for the DR field and brush mowers. The Team buffered the nest and then mowed the rest of the driveway. Then they mowed mustard from MP 12.0 to 12.6. The Weedies now have three functioning mowers thanks to Heather who was able to get one malfunctioning DR going again. Railroad maintenance, weed eradication, and bird watching all in one adventure. You never know what you'll find when working with the Mighty Weed Team!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Steve Hall, Mike Harris, Frank Werry, and Alan Hardy were hard at work on many worthwhile projects. One project has been an attempt to adjust the wing-box on the *Yellow Submarine* ballast regulator (formerly known as the *USS Sea Tiger*) to plow and pull a wider swath of rock the field-side of the rails. None of the dozen or so bolts holding the existing adjustment had been opened in 30 years or more. So, un-seizing them was a job-and-a-half for Fred, Alan, Cliff, and Steve. But, they persevered and the box is extended. After several weeks of work, Mike H., Frank, and Pat, got the A-5 motorcar started. The engine ran for some time and now it's time for a few adjustments before heading out on the line.

Thursday, Alan, Fred, Cliff, Heather, and Frank returned for more MOW fun. Frank, Fred, and Heather made the final adjustments on the A-5 to get it running like new – well, almost new. This restored motorcar will now become the Interpretive Handcar Program's primary head-end power. Cliff and Alan worked on the new-old tamper devising a system to hook the light-reference buggies to the machine.

Saturday started bright and early for some on the MOW Team – well, not so bright as the sun had yet to peak the horizon. The Team needed to get all of the equipment out of the container on the House Track, spun around on the turntable, and spotted up on the Old Main before the engine crew showed up to start the fire-up of the Granite Rock 10. When the engine crew arrived, SSRR General Manager Dick Noonan gathered everyone for an impromptu ceremony to present Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineers, Jeremy Levisch, with the Charles "Mack" McKeen Memorial Award. Indeed, Jeremy exemplifies the ideas of commitment to safety, skill, and public service in the railroad operations of the California State Railroad Museum. He has been a tremendous friend and supporter of the MOW Team and is well deserving of this award. Congratulations to Jeremy!

As the sun brightened the sky, over at the Shops, Alan, Pam Tatro, Ed Moriarty, Clem Meier, Scott Morrison, Mike Miller, Frank, Steve Nemeth, and Heather delved into the doughnuts delivered by Harry Voss. Two tasks were at hand for the day. First, Frank and Heather headed down to Baths with a load of rock to fill in a low-spot just opposite Switch 20, the south-most switch. With the locomotive facing south, brakemen must alight the locomotive on the west side during the run-around. This low spot has proved a bit of a hazard when stepping off the engine. But, Frank and Heather took care of it providing a safe landing zone for brakemen at Baths. The rest of the Team set to work on some issues with the Miller Park Siding. The plan is, once upgraded to Class 2 track standards, trains will be diverted onto the siding so that the Team can take-on some serious work on the Mainline through Miller Park. At the work site, Ed, Steve, and Mike began by pulling spikes on the marked ties. Clem and Pam started digging around the ends of ties. The Jackson 125 tie-exchanger was brought in. The track on the siding is 136-pound rail. It is taller than anything else on our line which is composed mostly of 75, 90, and 110-pound rail. We soon discovered that the work-head of the 125 could not get low enough to clear the base of the rail and grab the ties. So, we spun it around and tried using the ram-attachment to shove the ties out. Again, no bueno. Suddenly, things came to a halt. Scott, our master mechanic, figured out how to adjust the height of the work-head. But this was going to take time and trip back to the Shops to get tools. Work continued digging out rock around the ties. Meanwhile, with three idle track inspectors on the crew, the Mainline got a thorough review which included a discussion of the "V-max" formula for calculating the maximum operating speed pursuant to the degree of curvature and the height of the outside rail in a curve. Boggles the mind. Then Frank, Ed, and Steve replaced several joint-bolts where lock-washers had broken away. After some time and effort, Scott, Mike M., Alan, and Harry managed to adjust the height of the 125's work-head and began testing the modifications. It worked and was able to grab ties. Unfortunately, many of them disintegrated as the machine tried to pull them. In the end, we managed to remove only two intact ties and dozen or so partial ties. Clearly, this is tie-shear country. The tie-shear would make quick work of ties we need to remove. Fortunately, after a four-year re-build the tie-shear is nearly ready to deploy – certainly in the next couple of weeks. When the shear debuts, the MOW Team will have its own "Granite Rock 10 moment." Yes, it was a frustrating day at times but, we did learn a great deal about the operation of the 125 and working in an area with unusual conditions.

For the week ahead, Tuesday, wind permitting, the Weed Team will head for Hood to spray star thistle while making sure there are not bird nests in the area. The Shops crews will meet at or before 5 o'clock on Tuesday and Thursday. Saturday, we'll be heading back to Miller Park perhaps with the tie-shear. Either way, it will be more productive. Many thanks to the incredible volunteers of the MOW Team for your patience and dedication. The MOW Team, once again, persevered through adversity in an effort that will pay off with a safer railroad for all.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Before: Mike T. clears the way for the field-and-brush mowers on the driveway at Hood



...And after: what a difference a few hours and a team of dedicated Weedies make!



Fred un-seizing bolts to extend the regulator's wing-box



This is no Monty Python skit. Nor has Frank been run-over..



The "Yellow Submarine" ex-Sea Tiger with its starboard wing-box fully extended



By dawn's early light – the MOW Team's work-train is ready to deploy



Early morning ceremony in the shadow of the Granite Rock 10 to present Jeremy with the McKeen Award. From left: Jon Kreiter, Dave Megeath, Jeremy Levish, Illias Athanisiou, Leonard Cassieri, Dick Noonan



The new west-side brakeman landing strip at Switch 20



Clem digs out the end of a tie for the 125 to grab



The Team deploys along the Miller Park Siding



The Team spins the 125



Scott makes adjustments to the work-head height



The Granite Rock No. 10 passes by the MOW Team's working limits



Steve holds the bolt against the rail with his foot while Ed removes the nut





Frank and Steve put the new bolts in place



Having lowered the work-head and, after making adjustments to the hydraulics, Scott tests the 125's rail-clamping systems