

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for May 21, 2017. Your MOW Team was “cookin’ with Crisco” this week. Lots and lots of good stuff got done. So, before we get over-cooked here, let’s get this update going!

It’s such an amazing thing to see how a group of volunteers can perform like a team of true railroad professionals. That’s what it was like on Tuesday night when Pat Scholzen, Weston Snyder, Cliff Hayes, Klye Blackburn, Frank Werry, Joe Margucci, Gene Peck, Mike Harris, Matt McCracken, and Heather Kearns dedicated their evening to Maintenance of Way. Frank, Matt, Kyle, Heather, and Joe headed to Old Sacramento with two 55-gallon drums of red-diesel to fuel the very-thirsty track machines. While Frank, Matt, and Kyle were engaged in refueling operations, Heather and Joe replaced brake-shoes and make adjustments to the brake-rigging on the motorcar. The stopping power of the motorcar’s brakes had deteriorated significantly over recent weeks. So repairing them was a priority. Following the fueling, the machines were switched to be in the proper order for Saturday’s deployment and the scarifier-inserter was spun to face south. In the Shops, Cliff and Weston worked on building window shields for the smaller windows of the ballast regulator. The original Big Green Machine has been out of service due to issues with the transmission, fuel-injectors, and hydraulic-valves. So, Mike H. crawled beneath Bid Green to begin restoring it to operation by tackling the transmission troubles. This is an important first step as, once the tranny is repaired, the machine can be moved over a pit in the Erecting Shop. Mike H.’s efforts were exceptional and very much appreciated. With darkness descending, it was “Quittin’ time, USA” and the Team headed home, very pleased with the evening’s successes.

Thursday, Alan, Heather, Ed Kottal, Weston, Kyle, Matt, Mike H., Joe, Kevin Hecteman, and Frank brought high spirits to the Erecting Shop. Heather finished testing of the tie-shear’s electrical system and certified it ready to roll. Weston replaced the rather wimpy-horn on the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger with one that has a little more, “oomph.” Kyle and Matt drilled mounting holes into new switch-targets that we’ll be installing soon at Baths. We think train-crews will like them. They are reflective with anti-graffiti coatings which should keep them looking pretty for quite some time. Joe, Ed K., and Alan got the plate-lifter and track-gauger onto their carriage for deployment on Saturday. This morphed into a slightly more complex project than initially anticipated as it’s been a long time since the two machines were operated in tandem. Figuring out how to get them in the right position to work together took a bit of a re-learning curve. Needless to say, our dauntless Team figured it out. Mike H. continued his valiant efforts with restoring the Big Green Machine to operation. With Ed K.’s help, he clambered under the machine and replaced the hydraulic fluid in the transmission. It now can be moved. This was not an easy task to say the least. Over in Old Sacramento, Heather was EIC for a switching operation with the motorcar. Kevin operated the motorcar as the work-train was pulled out of the container and rearranged for more efficient positioning. All in all, it was a good evening of progress and productivity.

Saturday was another day – another day that began with doughnuts for Alan, Steve Nemeth, Heather, Anthony Filamor, Ed K., Chris Carlson, Mike Miller, John Rexroth, Mike Taylor, Ed Moriarty, Frank, and Pam Tatro. Following the crew’s doughnut-fix, the day’s plan was discussed in the job-briefing. We were headed back down to the Sutterville Line to the Zoo to plate, gauge, and spike the new ties installed over the past few weeks. Also, there were 28 more ties to pull under the rails up near the I-5 Bridge. Joe, who was part of the train crew as a student-brakeman, arrived extra early to open up all our machines in Old Sacramento. This was a huge help. Chris deployed the tie-shear for pulling the plate-lifter and gauger across the UP Main from the Shops which Conductor Heather arranged in true expert fashion. Then the “challenges” started. In Old Sac., the motorcar would not start forcing a reconfiguring of our switching plan and re-write of our complex train-orders. The Kalamazoo-tug had to be brought down to the container to pull everything we needed out. We owe a big thank you to DSLE Jeremy Levis, Train Master Al Utzig, and Crew Dispatcher Dianne Tincher for all their help and patience as we tried to get out of town. At Baths, more switching was needed to get things in the right order. After spinning the scarifier, its turntable would not retract again delaying our progress. Fortunately, Chris and Heather figured out the problem. Alan in the tamper headed down the hill towards the Zoo to start tamping-up all the new ties. The plate-lifter and gauger were deployed behind it. The next frustration occurred when the pull-start on the gauger pulled-apart thus rendering that machine inoperable. At the top of the hill, where 28 ties needed to be inserted, Mike T. and Pam lined them up at each empty tie-crib for Heather in the scarifier, along with Steve and Ed M, to pull under the rails. Fortunately, this operation went without a hitch. Despite the gauger being out of service, the ties could still be plated, although not spiked. Frank, Mike M., Anthony, and Ed K. fired-up the plate-lifter (which worked!) and got tie-plates placed under the rails. Chris focused on getting the motorcar running. He discovered the solenoid on the starter motor was dislodged from the firewall thus depriving it of a “ground” connection. Once fixed, it started right up. Chalk-up another success. So, plating of ties became the sole focus. Mike T. and Heather laid out plates on each of the new ties as Anthony, Frank, Steve, and Ed K. got them placed with the plate-lifter. Temperatures were on the rise as afternoon continued. Considering the issues of the morning, the Team decided to pack up around 3 o’clock to give a little extra time in case any additional challenges might arise. Fortunately, we got back to Old Sac. without incident. Although things didn’t go quite according to plan, the Team showed a remarkable ability to adjust on the fly. So, our “challenges” became “opportunities,” as Mike T. likes to say. Indeed.

This coming week, the regular MOW Team Tuesday and Thursday operations will proceed as normal. Meet at the Shops at or before 5 o’clock. Thursday, the Mighty Weed Team will be heading down the Zoo Line to trim trees. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. Saturday is Memorial weekend and, with the Music Festival and “shuttle-train” to the Auto Museum in full swing, our ability to deploy equipment to the Sutterville Line may be impeded. But, we’ll figure something out. As usual, 8 o’clock a.m. is the call-time. Many thanks to everyone – the dedicated volunteers, our supporters, and our friends on the train operations side who work so well with us as we endeavor to build a better railroad!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Matt operates the fuel-pump while Frank fuels the Kalamazoo



"Fill 'er up!" Joe pulls the scarifier up to the pump at Matt's Mobile Gas Station...



Next up, Matt and Frank fuel the tie-crane



Finally, the tamper gets its tank filled by Kyle and Matt



Heather hands Joe a brake-shoe for installation on the motorcar



Joe working on the motorcar's brake-rigging



Weston installing a new horn on the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger



Matt and Kyle drill bolt-holes in the new switch targets



Alan on the forklift bringing the gauger and its carriage to Track 5 in the Erecting Shop for deployment



Frank moves the tie-shear towards the door to give more room for placing the gauger behind it



Ed K. guides Alan on the forklift with gauger and carriage to make sure it goes on the rails and not in the pit



Ed K. and Joe now guide the plate-lifter to the carriage



Weston requests a "red-zone" from engineer Kevin on the motorcar before going in-between



Green means GO! Chris in the tie-shear pulls that gauger and plate-lifter carriage over to Old Sac.





At Baths, there's more switching to do



It's an "E-ticket" ride for Heather as Chris spins the scarifier



Mike T. and Pam position new ties along empty tie-cribs...



...Then get them set under the base of the rail



Heather in the scarifier-inserter inserts new ties assisted by Ed M., Steve, and Ed K.



The gauger is deployed



Followed by the plate-lifter



Tie insertion continues with Steve and Ed M. working with Heather in the scarifier-inserter



Great. Now the guager breaks down



John taking one of his six ten-minute breaks to which he is entitled



But, the plate-lifter is working as Mike M., Frank, and Ed K. place plates between the base of the rails and the tie



The plate-lifter grabs the rails and lifts them just enough to squeeze tie-plates between them and the ties



Anthony and Steve add more gas to the plate-lifter



Mike T. joins the plating fun with Frank and Mike M.



Heather finds an elusive joint-plate



Alan tamps the plated ties





Time to put our toys away



Anthony cranks on the hand-winch and pulls the gauger back into position on its carriage