

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team Update for June 14, 2015. Solving problems and moving forward was what this week was all about. So, let's not make any new problems by delaying this update any further.

The primary concern on Tuesday was the retrieval of the old-old tamper which had suffered a disabling malfunction the previous Saturday. Alan Hardy, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Frank Werry, Gene Peck, and Heather Kearns were, of course, up to the task. The challenge was that the "maxi-brakes" on the tamper require compressed-air to release. Without air, that beast "ain't goin' nowhere." So, Gene and Mike H. devised a plan to splice into the old-old tamper's air system and connect an air-umbilical between it and the Kalamazoo tug. Frank and Fred gathered up air-hoses and tools. Then the team headed down the line to Mile Post 1.85 where the machine lay in wait. Mike H. began making the necessary modification to the tamper. Frank W. and Fred un-jumbled the hose and connected it into the tug's air-system. The operation went very smoothly and, within no time, the tamper's air-system was pumped-up and the brakes released. Soon, it was back in Old Sac. and spotted on the 150 Track until we could make room in the Shops for it. Speaking of the Shops, Heather spent the evening installing a new carburetor on the engine of the Weed Team's spray-rig. Pat and Cliff built and installed new guard shields for the tie-crane. And Alan did what Alan does: a little bit of everything. It was a successful evening.

Thursday, Alan, Joe Rivera, Heather, Fred, Mike H., Frank Squire, Frank W., and Gene, got more problems solved. Gene, Alan, and Fred had more fun than a barrel of monkeys sorting spikes out of a barrel. There are over 100 ties to spike-down at Miller Park and a plentiful supply is necessary. It couldn't have been more exciting for them. Joe re-installed the pump on the Weed Team's spray-rig. To make room for the old-old tamper in the Shops, the tie-shear would be sent over to Old Sac. Frank S., Heather, Mike H., and Frank W. headed over there to retrieve the tug and tamper while the crew in the Shops got the shear ready to roll. The air-umbilical was reestablished and the tug pulled the tamper onto the interchange track. Conductor Frank W. toned-up the UP Dispatchers in Omaha to secure a green signal indication for Mike H. piloting the tug. On the Shops side, Alan and Fred got the shear onto the transfer table ready to make the exchange. Mike H. and Frank S. took care of the old-old tamper while Heather and Conductor Frank W. sent the shear over to over to Old Sac. By evening's end, everything was tied-down and secure. Indeed, it was another outstanding job accomplished by this dedicated crew of volunteers.

Members of the crew arrived early on Saturday in Old Sac. to get all the MOW equipment lined-up and ready to head out. At the Shops, the tug pulling three tie-laden flatcars along with the new-old tamper were set-up for their journey over the UP Main. All of this was done before the doughnuts arrived. Alan, Clem Meier, Steve Nemeth, a quorum of "Mikes" – Willis, Miller, and Florentine, Heather, Frank W., and Pam Tatro were ready to pounce on that pink-box which appeared with Chris Carlson. Installing and plating the remaining ties at Miller Park was the plan for the day. It was going to be hot out there, so the Team decided to work through lunch and call it quits when the temperature got unbearable. Remember, the radiated heat from the ballast-rock adds a good 10 to 15 degrees of heat to the work-area. At Miller Park, Frank W. in the tie-shear cut-out an additional four ties that we had missed in previous weeks (machinery parked on top of them). Chris piloted the tug while Mike F., Mike M., and Steve unloaded ties and spotted them for installation. Heather in the scarifier/inserter came in and pulled them into place. Alan, in the new-old tamper, tamped the ties up against the base of the rail. Tie plates were installed. Everything is now ready to spike. Meanwhile, EIC of tie debris relocation, Steve, along with Mike W., and Clem, cleaned up a significant area between the Main and Siding took the sliced-up ties down to Setzer for deposit in the dead-tie pile. What a day!

At the same time, in Old Sacramento, an exciting adventure was taking place. The Part 214 Roadway Worker Safety training make-up session was proceeding in the Stanford Gallery. Folks who had missed the previous sessions in February were there to qualify and requalify under the federal guidelines. Let me tell ya. It was more fun than a barrel of spikes! But, seriously, folks, Roadway Worker Safety training is an important requirement that is mandated by federal law. We're all volunteers and safety out on the line is our top priority. Understanding the procedures spelled our under Part 214 keep all of us safe. Now, if only the instructor had been more interesting...

The MOW Team sends an extra special "shout-out" to our very good friends with the Signals Department who have facilitated the Miller Park project by manually operating the grade-crossing warning system at Front Street as the train runs through. Because the MOW Team is working within Front Street south-approach circuit and, as our machines trigger deployment of the gates, it is necessary to deactivate the signaling system while we are in the area. Major thanks go out to Dale Parker, Chief Signal Engineer, who spent the last two Saturdays taking on this duty. As the project continues over the next couple of weeks, other members of the Signals crew will be joining us and we appreciate it. This is a prime example of separate departments coming together in the common cause of building a better railroad!

This coming week, the Weed Team will return to action. They'll be attacking the barbarous hordes of green invaders on Tuesday. Meet at the Shops at 8 o'clock a.m. The Tuesday and Thursday Shops crew will gather as usual at or before 5 o'clock. Saturday, the spiking fun at Miller Park commences promptly with arrival of doughnuts at 8 o'clock a.m. We should conclude the Miller Park Project in the next couple of weeks. A month from now, the inconvenience of the diversion onto the Siding will be but a distant memory. In the meantime, we'll have a better, stronger, safer, and more stable track. Thanks to the valiant volunteers of the MOW Team who have taken-on this project, despite unpleasant conditions. Also, from Operations to Signals, thanks to everyone who has worked with us to facilitate the track rebuild!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Mike H. modifies the compressed air system on the old-old tamper to accommodate an umbilical hook-up from the Kalamazoo tug



Fred and Frank manage a slightly snarled air-hose...





Hospital train headed back to town: with brakes released, the old-old tamper is towed back to town by the tug



Successfully spotted on the 150 Track, Mike H. and Frank solve the immediate problem of getting the old-old tamper home





Heather solves another problem by repairing the carburetor on the Weed Team's spray rig



Fred and Alan spend an exciting evening sorting spikes...





Making room in the Erecting Shop: the new-old tamper and tie-shear on the transfer table



Locomotive Clem shoves a flatcar out of the Erecting Shop for a journey down the line





The new-old tamper and Kalamazoo tug pulling tie-laden flatcars crosses the UP Main at RV 988



Mike M., Mike F., and Steve roll ties off the flatcar for placement and installation





Oops! One rolled just a bit too far...



Clem and Mike W. clear out tie debris strewn about the line





Heather operating the scarifier and Mike F. on the ground pull new ties into place



The tie replacement operation is like a production line





Alan tamps under the guidance of Mike F. and Mike M.



Now, that's an impressive line-up of track machines