

Greetings,

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for July 23, 2017. This week, your MOW Team finished work on the Firing Line project over in the Old Southern Pacific Rail Yards. So, let's get you updated on that as well as the rest of the exciting MOW Team news starting right now!

A special evening training session for the SSRR's student brakemen took place on Tuesday. As all five student-brakemen this year, Joe Margucci, Steve Wilson, Jose Gomez, Weston Snyder, and Ed Kottal, are key members of the MOW Team, as are veteran brakemen, Frank Werry and Ed Moriarty, who served as brakemen trainers. Therefore, they weren't at MOW on Tuesday. Nonetheless, Heather Kearns, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, and Matt McCracken were at the Shops working away. Mike Taylor was also on hand dealing with Weed Team business. Matt started the evening by reinstalling one of the windshields on the A-4 motorcar which had been removed for necessary work on the frame. Then he, Pat, and Gene set out to install a new alternator on the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger. With the recent upgrades to the 125 that the Team has been making, a new, more powerful alternator is necessary. Gene put the thing together as Pat and Matt removed the old one. Then they installed the new one but found that a larger tensioner bracket needs to be acquired that's compatible with the heftier alternator. Quartermaster in Chief, Heather, will procure one. Despite the small crew on Tuesday, it was a good evening of work.

The Mighty Weed Team reconvened on Thursday after its summer recess. Mike Taylor, Heather, Steve W., and Dave Megeath planned a big day with the intention of heading down the Sutterville Line to cut wayward tree limbs. Before any such pruning can take place, the Weed Team is under a mandate from State Park to survey the area, accompanied by the official ornithologist, for any bird habitats that might be disturbed. Arrangements were made to meet the bird-man down on the line. Unfortunately, a "bird-emergency" elsewhere prevented his presence. So, the Weedies undertook some weed remediation closer to the ground. It turned out to be a good thing because the man-lift was acting-up. The alternator was not producing sufficient charge for the battery. So, after a good morning of close to the ground pruning, the Weed Team packed it up and headed back to town. Despite the challenging morning, this dedicated team of folks accomplished a great deal. Kudos to them all.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Joe, Weston, Frank, Chris Carlson, and Heather kept the good works coming. Heather commandeered Weston and Joe to deal with the man-lift's difficulties over in Old Sacramento. They managed to install a new alternator but, it too was not performing as it should. It appears that this new alternator, a rebuild, may be defective or improperly rebuilt. Sigh.... In other news, the MOW Team has been offered a stockpile of rail, switch components, and ties from an industrial line that once interchanged with the Western Pacific Railroad. So, Chris and Frank headed out to survey it and discuss options. It's quite a trove of rail for which we could find good use. But, the logistics of transporting back to Museum property will be a challenge. More discussions will ensue. Back at the Shops, "Quittin' time, USA" was announced and thus ended a rather interesting day.

Saturday was "D-Day" for the Firing Line Track. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. Joe, Clem Meier, Mike Miller, Heather, Steve Nemeth, Michael Florentine, Harry Voss, Jose, Frank, and Chris were determined to get it done – following doughnuts, of course. Track-jacks would be used to level the track and more ballast-rock brought in. Then the tamper would tamp the leveled track squeezing rock under the raised ties which was followed by the ballast-regulator to dress the track. Steve N. took to tool-caddy out to the site with the forklift. Frank climbed aboard the backhoe while Chris and Harry worked on bringing Green Machine 2 (GM2), which been down for a, back to life. They got it working – at least temporarily. The backhoe was thirsty so, Frank, Jose, and Joe filled it, along with several jerrycans, with luscious red-diesel. Clem, Mike M., Jose, Mike F., Joe, and Steve N. then began setting track-jacks into pockets between the ties. The track level was placed on the rails and jacks cranked until the south rail was level with the north. Frank on the backhoe and Harry on GM2 brought in lots more rock. Steve N., Joe, Clem, Jose, and Mike F. spread the rock and filled in holes with shovels. Chris fired-up the tamper and tamped the newly level track. Things were progressing great. Then, the tamper experienced a hydraulic line failure which Joe managed to triage. With the tamper patched-up, Jose got a lesson in its operation from Chris and they managed to finish tamping the line just as the triage repair failed. So, it was put away and the ballast regulator brought out. Because its turntable is a bit wonky, the regulator was taken to Old Sac. where it was spun on the Museum's turntable. Conductor Heather arranged a quick crossing of the Union Pacific Mainline with dispatcher "Mad-Dog" (who likes us) in Omaha. The regulator was spun and soon on its way back to the job-site where Chris plowed and pulled rock evenly about the track before brooming it several times with its big spinning broom. The result is a beautiful stretch of track. In fact, it's arguably the finest looking yard-track in North America – if not the world. With that, the Firing Line extension track was deemed complete. Now, the storage track extends from the transfer table, through the Firing Line on north side of the Boiler Shop, all the way to the other side of the I-5 freeway.

With some time remaining in the afternoon, Heather, Chris, and Joe headed to Old Sacramento to continue work on the man-lift's new alternator where they confirmed that it's bad and not producing the voltage necessary to keep the battery charged. Mike F. and Steve N. cleaned-up the hydraulic fluid spilled by the tamper. Despite the breakdowns, it had been an incredibly successful day for the fantastic volunteers of the MOW Team. They built the Firing Line extension from scratch, by hand, with purely volunteer labor in temperatures cresting the century mark. Congratulations to the Team who collectively felt a great sense of accomplishment upon its completion!

This coming week, new adventures beckon for the MOW Team. You know the drill. The start time on Tuesday and Thursday will be at or before 5 o'clock. Saturday looks like a day of servicing switches (which hasn't been done yet this year). The grease-bucket comes out at 8 o'clock a.m. Many thanks to the incredible volunteers who "git-'r-done" week in and week out as we strive to build a better railroad.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard



Matt installs a windshield on the A-4 motorcar



Gene does the necessary assembly work on the Jackson 125's new heftier alternator



Mike T. and Dave do some close to ground pruning on the Sutterville Line



Joe and Weston install a new alternator on the man-lift



Frank and Chris inspect a stockpile of rail that has been offered to the MOW Team



Part of the old industrial track that interchanged with the Western Pacific



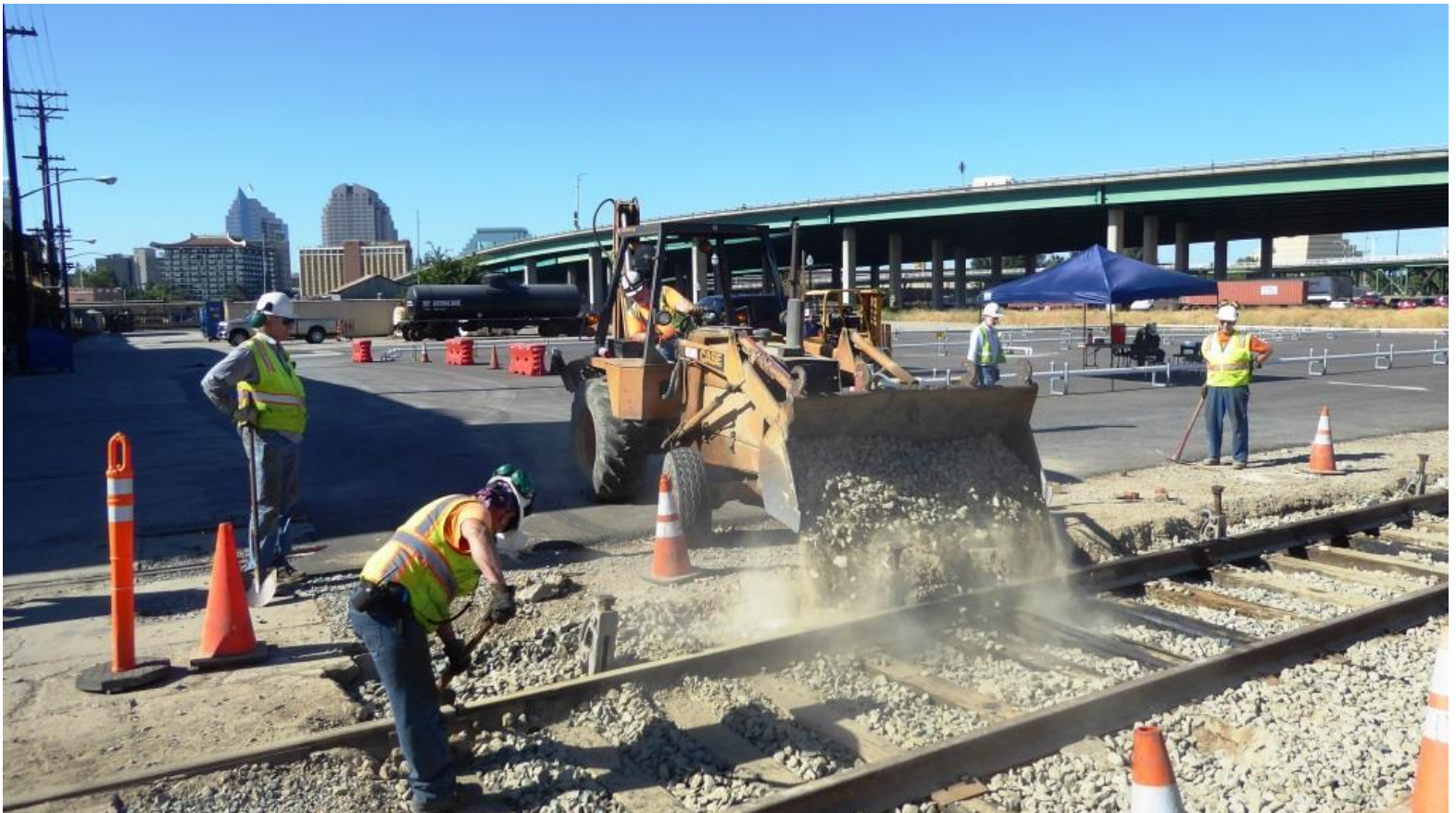
The tamper is wide awake and ready to roll on this beautiful Saturday morning as the transfer table brings it to the Firing Line



Clem measures the cross-level as Jose cranks on the track-jack



Steve and Joe put on a show as they adjust the jack and read the gauge on the track-level



Frank brings more ballast rock in with the back-hoe



Meanwhile, Harry and Chris get GM2 working – at least for a little while



Chris attaches the bucket to GM2's fork and Harry gets ready to join Frank in transporting ballast-rock to the job-site



Cue the tamper!



"Red-zone!" Mike F. pulls a jack as the tamper approaches



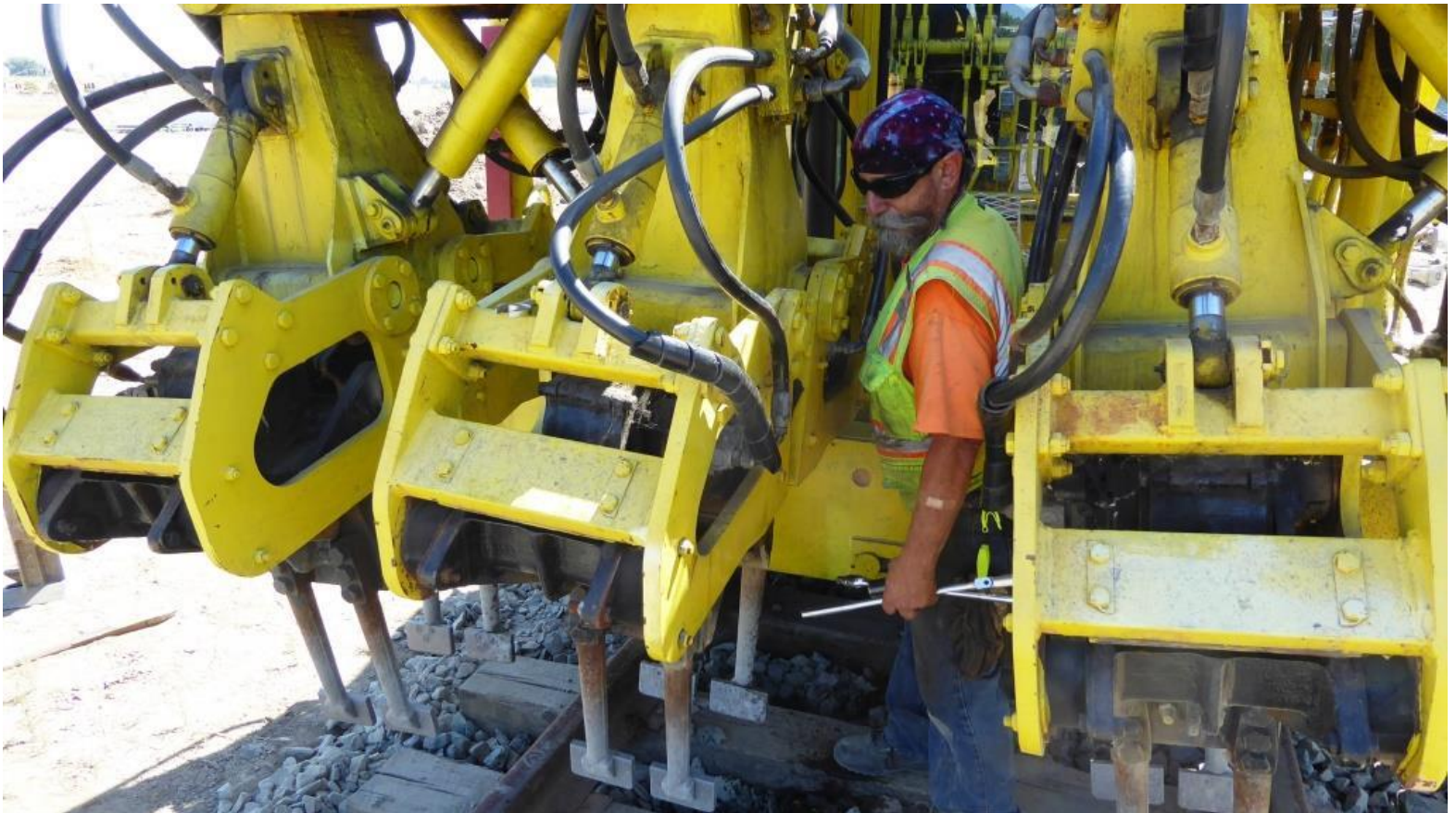
Joe and Jose continue spreading new rock to fill in holes so that there's plenty for the tamper to tamp



Harry dumps a big scoop of rock onto the track with GM2



Steve, Joe, Mike M., and Mike F. keep spreading that rock about



Soon, Dr. Joe is called in to treat a patient...



Cue the ballast-regulator! Conductor Heather arranges a quick crossing of the UP Main



In Old Sac., Joe spins the regulator as Conductor Heather gets ready to arrange the return trip



Now properly positioned, it's "go-time" for the regulator!



Chris in the regulator starts by pulling rock into the center of the track by running the machine backwards with the plows deployed



Rock gathers between the plows and is then spread evenly through the center of the track



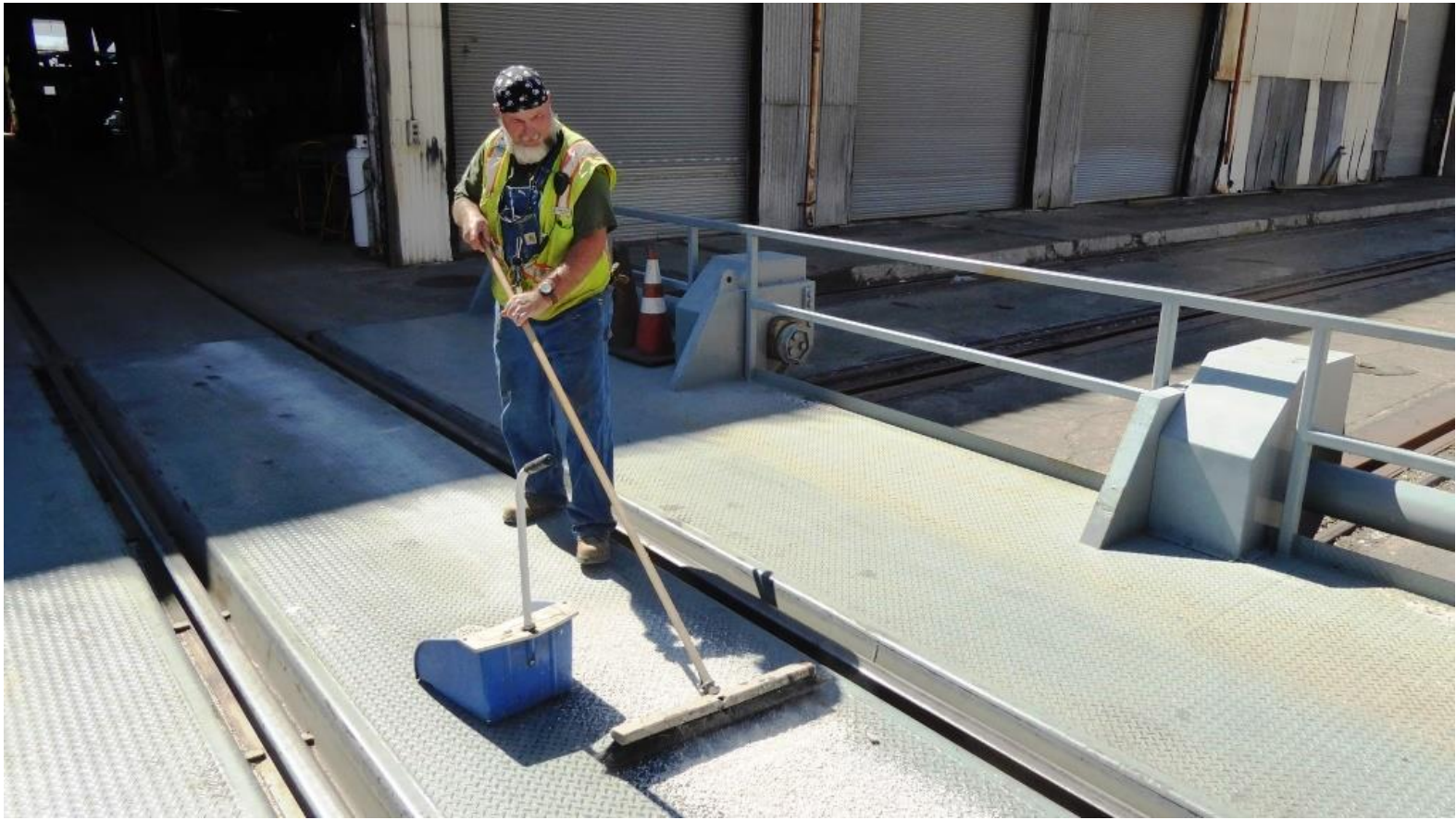
Next, the big spinning broom pushes and compacts the rock between the ties...



...And creates its own weather



Frank, Mike F., and Harry pick-up all the extra pieces lying about as the project is now officially done



Mike F. cleans-up the hydraulic fluid on the transfer table that leaked from the tamper as it returned to the Shops



Now, that's one fine lookin' stretch of yard-track (if I do say so, myself...)