

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for August 24, 2014. Your MOW Team was busy as bees this last week and managed to make significant progress on a number of fronts. And, when things are going well, and accomplishment achieved, it's a great feeling. So, before we suffer any colony collapse disorder here, let's get this update buzzing...

Tuesday's activities began with the reconvening of the Weed Team after their summer recesses. Mike Taylor, Heather Kearns, and Joe Galipeau established a quorum and headed south to Hood to pick-up where they had left off last time they were out on the line. Using the field and brush mowers, Joe, Heather, and Mike T. mowed about half a mile of the right-of-way. It's was a challenging job over tough terrain, which they'll continue this coming Tuesday. Yes, the Weedies are keeping the Hood dream alive.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Chris Carlson, Alan Hardy, Pat Scholzen, Josh Ilac, Mike Harris, Frederick Carr, Frank Werry, Harry Voss, and Gene Peck kept the home fires burning. Work continued on the new-old tamper, the tie-shear, and the Kalamazoo tug. Mike H. is leading the team's efforts on the Kalamazoo. Chris is heading up the work on bringing the tie-shear back to life while Alan perseveres with the restoration of the light-reference system on the new-old tamper. Everyone pitched in to make the evening very productive.

Thursday, Alan, Heather, Josh, Matt Blackburn, and Fred came in to continue with the valiant efforts. Heather worked on the Electrical system of the Kalamazoo while Matt did some battery maintenance. Josh and Fred reinstalled the drive motor on the Tie Shear.

It was an early wake-up call for the MOW Team on Saturday. The plan for the day was to tackle the replacement of the head-block at Switch 16 (the south switch at Miller Park). A "head-block" is the 15 foot long mega-tie that anchors the whole turnout. Our trusty track inspectors found that the crack in the head-block was causing the switch stand to become unstable. Two pink boxes of fuel greeted Clem Meier, Alan, Harry, Fred, John Rexroth, Michael Florentine, Frank, Mike T., Chris, and Heather. Before 7:30, the Team had the MOW work consist all fired-up and ready to head down the line. Mike T., Alan, Mike F., and Fred began by digging out the rock around the head-block. Heather, John, and Harry pulled the spikes securing the gauge plate. Chris unbolted the brackets. The tamper was brought in and its paddles used to shove the tie immediately to the south further south so that we could slide the gauge plate out into the space created. We clamped the east point to the east stock-rail. The switch stand was un-spiked and removed. The control rod and switch rod were unbolted and moved out of the way. In a team effort, Mike T., Mike F., Fred, and Alan used timber-tongs to loosen the grip of the rock on the block. Harry unloaded the section-gang machine from the truck and rolled to the job site. Our concern was that the head-block might split into multiple pieces as it came out. But, under Chris's skillful control, the section-gang machine removed the offending specimen in one piece. Heather, Fred, Mikes F. and T., and John rushed in to begin digging out the crib. The new head-block was brought in and the section-gang machine quickly got it in place. With some cajoling, Alan and Mike T. replaced the gauge plate while Chris and Mike installed the bracket wedges. Next came the difficult part: adjusting it all. The rods were reconnected. After measurements and adjustment to find the optimal position, the switch stand was spiked down.

By this time, train operations had begun. Trains could pass through our work limits safely – albeit at a restricted speed of five miles per hour – as the switch-points were clamped. With each passing, we unclamped the points and continued with the adjustments. Finally, we had the switch working like clock-work and the 12:30 train was authorized to pass through our work limits at the maximum speed allowed under the rules of the railroad. The Team declared victory and headed to lunch!

Back at the Shops, Frank and Clem continued rebuilding the Interpretive Handcar Program's motorcar/speeder. They managed to get the wheels off and replace the drive-chain. In the afternoon, Chris, Fred, and Alan worked on shops projects while John, Mike F., Mike T., Frank, and Heather took care of some issues at our Setzer Yard, then brought the tamper, motorcar work-consist, and scarifer back into town. We all finished up the day with that great feeling of accomplishment. Yes, it was a good day.

Replacing a head-block – especially under train traffic – is something that we don't do very often. But, thanks to a fantastic, talented, and dedicated crew, we got the job done more quickly than anticipated – and had fun in the process. Plus, we had a great train crew who worked with us to facilitate this needed fix. Many thanks to Train Master, George Papadopoulos and Dispatcher Myrletta Downes for their efforts with our orders to get us out on the line as quickly as possible. Also, to engineers Dick Noonan and Jon Kreiter for their fine train handling through our work limits. We're all working together with the common goal to build a better railroad.

This coming week, the Mighty Weed Team will gather, once again, to continue its efforts at Hood. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. Bring lots of water and a hearty lunch Tuesday and Thursday, the north door of the Erecting Shop will open at 5 p.m. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday the MOW Team will be interpreting and demonstrating the fire truck as part of the Americana Festival in Old Sacramento. Frank Werry is coordinating that event. If you're interested in working with fire truck on any of the days, please respond to this message and more info will be forwarded to you. Again, many thanks to the fantastic folks who volunteer with and support the MOW Team!

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.





Mike T. clearing the right of way at Hood



Matt servicing the batteries of the forklift





Clem working on the refit of Interpretive Handcar Program's motorcar/speeder



Mike F., and Fred shove the gauge plate off of the head-block and into the crib the adjacent tie





Mike T. removes the spikes from the switch-stand



Mike T., Fred, Mike F., and Alan use timber-tongs to break the head-block free





The section-gang machine makes quick work of removing the old head-block



Now that the old head-block is removed, Mike T., Mike F., and Fred get it out of the way





Heather and Alan guide the new head-block into place



With the new head-block situated, Alan and Mike T., slide the gauge plate into place





Alan, Heather, and Mike T., adjust the position of the switch-stand



Let's get this right: Chris, Alan, and Fred move the east point to line the transit clip with the bolt-hole





Here comes the train!



VICTORY ON THE RAILS! Heather, Mike F., Fred, Chris, Mike T., Alan, Harry, and John stand over the dead head-block!