

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for September 13, 2015. Track, track, track. Build, build, build. That's what we do and that's what's going on over in the Rail Yards – and a whole lot of digging. So, before this update falls in a hole, let's get it started.

As you will recall from last week, the company completing the environmental clean-up work in the Rail Yards wants to dig-up the area where several specimens of railroad cars old locomotives are stored. So, the MOW Team has been tasked with building about 300 feet of track onto which these cars can be moved. This project was dropped on us late in the week which gave us no opportunity to plan or stage any equipment or materials. We just went out there last Saturday and started building track hoping we could find the materials we needed to get project underway. So, this week was dedicated to planning and staging the next phases of the project. Cliff Hayes, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Heather Kearns, Frank Werry, Mike Harris, and Alan Hardy spent Tuesday evening hunting through the Erecting and Boiler Shops for the track materials the Team needed. They "tracked-down" joint bars, compromise-joints, spikes, and bolts. These materials were placed in the bucket of the loader for easy transport to the job-site. Also, Frank and Mike H. removed the large lift cylinder from the left side of the ballast regulator which needs to be rebuilt. Cliff continued to make shields for the lights on track machines.

Thursday, Alan, Heather, Cliff, Frank, and Mike H. were on site. The transfer table's rails are about an inch higher than the rails on the apron of the Erecting Shop leading out of Bay 5. Our machines have small wheels and find it difficult to climb the mismatch onto the transfer table. So Cliff welded ramps onto the heads of the rails. While welding, a pigeon walked up, walked around, got within inches of the blinding-white light from the arc-welder, watched the action intently then, quietly walked away. Cliff, wearing a face shield, didn't even see the pigeon as it walked all around him. He just kept on welding. The things one sees at Maintenance of Way... Once the ramps were in place, Frank and Mike T. undertook the great machine shuffle of 2015 to get everything in the right position for quick deployment Saturday. We'd be using the rail-lifter and the Nordberg Super "B" spiker which would undertake its maiden voyage on our line. Then, they loaded spikes into spiker. Heather placed the tool caddie into the truck then fueled the Green Machine and Loader. They had things ready to go.

A big pink box of sugary goodness greeted the Team early on Saturday morning. Paying proper homage were Alan, Al Utzig, Mike H., Harry Voss, Clem Meier, Scott Morrison, Mike Taylor, Pam Tatro, Heather, and Frank. Phase 2 of the track build would begin. The plan for the day was to take the rail-lifter out onto the new track we laid last week so we could line-up the ties and place tie-plates under the rail. That would be followed by the Super "B" which would spike everything down. Then, we'd continue extending the track to the west under the freeway by using panel track left-over from the Amtrak Depot realignment project a few years back. Harry and Mike H. filled the Super "B" with about 15 gallons of hydraulic fluid while Scott, Frank, Heather, Pam, Mike T., and Clem used the rail-lifter to relieve downward pressure on the ties so that they could be aligned properly and plates put in place. Each tie would be spaced exactly 24 inches from each other. Once that was done, Alan, Mike T., and Pam brought in the Super "B" to begin spiking down every tie. This was the first time we've had the opportunity to use the spiker. It's a complex machine that requires three people to operate – one person over each rail and a third loading spikes into the breaches. There was a bit of a learning curve as Alan, Mike T., and Pam figured it out. But soon, they were driving spikes into the hard-oak ties like the preverbal hot-knife through butter. The Super "B" worked well and will prove a great addition to our repertoire. We had wanted to begin ballasting the new track but we could not get our ballast hoppers over to the Rail Yards from Old Sacramento. Several railroad cars from a freight move were left sitting on the 560 Track waiting to be picked up by the Union Pacific.

Over at the panel track pile, Harry, Al, Heather, and Mike T. were grinding the rail-ends so that the panels would fit together. The panels had been cut from continuously welded rail leaving rail-ends with nubs on them that required grinding-down to smooth out. Then, Al climbed into the loader and Mike H. on Big Green, and began the well-choreographed dance of the machines to move panels to their new position. These things weigh nearly 6,000 pounds each. To get them where they needed to be, the Green Machine would travel in reverse carrying one end of the panel with the loader lifting the other. The terrain they crossed was very rough adding a bit of challenge to the operation. Luckily, Mike H. and Al are two of our finest and most experienced machine operators. It took about two hours but, Al and Mike H. moved and positioned four 40-foot long panels into precise position adding another 120- feet of track to the line. There's now about a 60-foot gap between the track we built last week and the panel track sections laid this week. We'll fill-in that gap and connect the two segments once we get the green-light from the environmental mitigation company cleaning up the Yards. That gap currently is a make-shift road that the environmental folks use to haul dirty dirt out and we can't build track over their road until they are done using it. With that, we called it a day and packed up. As far as track in place, we've completed about two thirds of the principle construction. Next Saturday, if the 560 Track is clear, the Team will start ballasting the eastern segment, lining, and tamping it. Then, we'll use the rail-drill to drill bolt-holes for joint bars on the panel track segments and get all the accouterments staged to fill in the "gap".

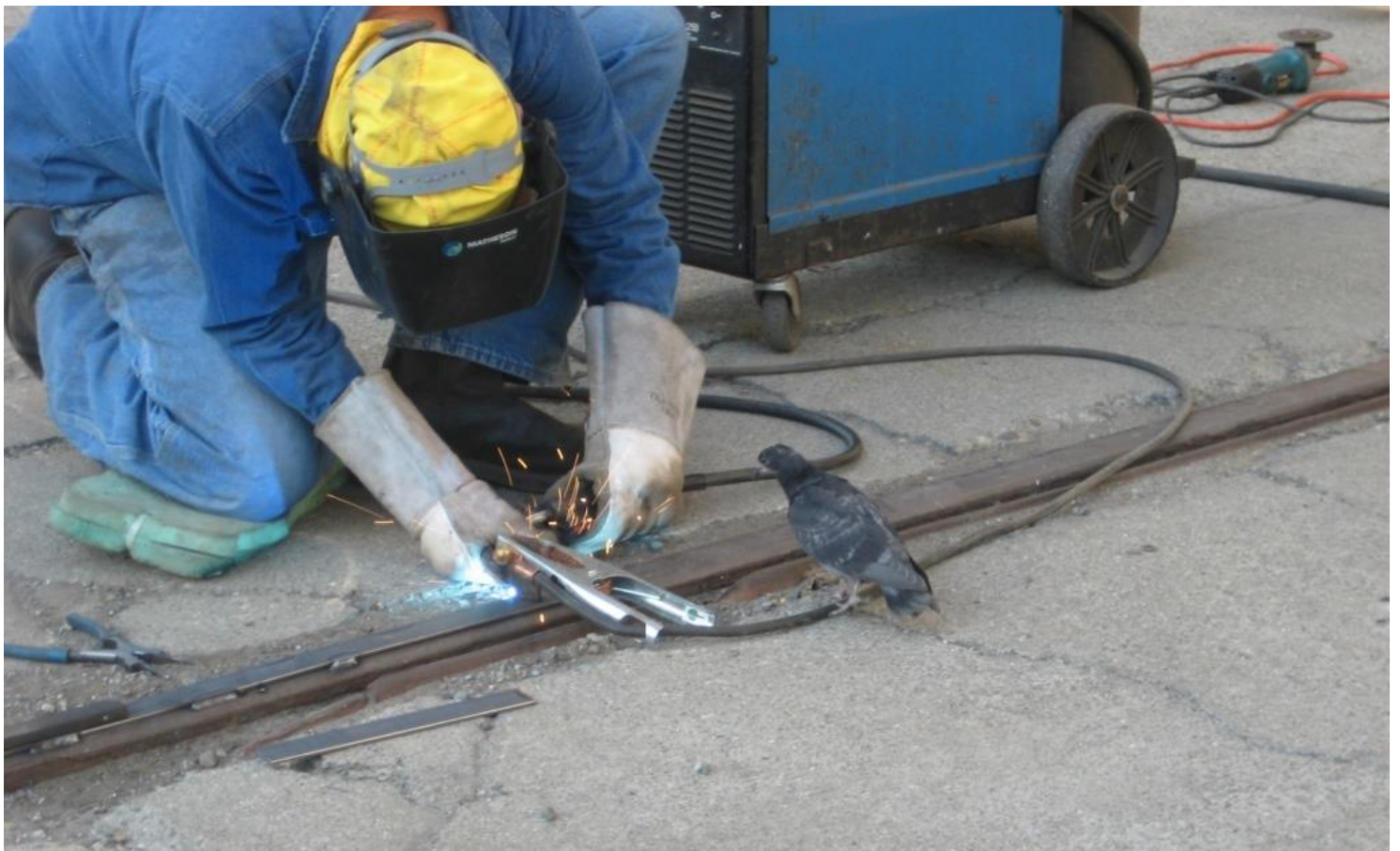
Speaking of this coming week, on Tuesday, The Weed Team will be taking on trees in Old Sacramento. Meet at the Erecting Shop at 9 o'clock a.m. The doors will be open for the Tuesday and Thursday evening crews at or before 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday, doughnut service starts at 8 o'clock a.m. sharp. Anyone who is late will have to aggressively seek a doughnut (it's the law). We're on schedule, folks, to have this project completed in the next couple of week. Thank you to all the volunteers who make it happen. Also, many thanks to those of you who sent kind notes of support and gratitude this last week. They were passed on to the Team and we all appreciate it very much.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Somebody is suddenly is very interested in what Cliff is doing...



... And Cliff puts on a fascinating show for his audience





Rearranging the equipment for quick deployment: Frank in the tie-shear and Mike H. in the Super "B" spiker



Scott operates the rail-lifter as Frank, Heather, and Mike T. align the ties and insert plates





Scott lifts the north rail as Mike T. inserts a joint-plate under the joint



Frank gets ready to insert a tie-plate as Heather and Pam square-up the tie





Clem measures the distance between ties as Mike T. lines them the proscribed 24 inches apart

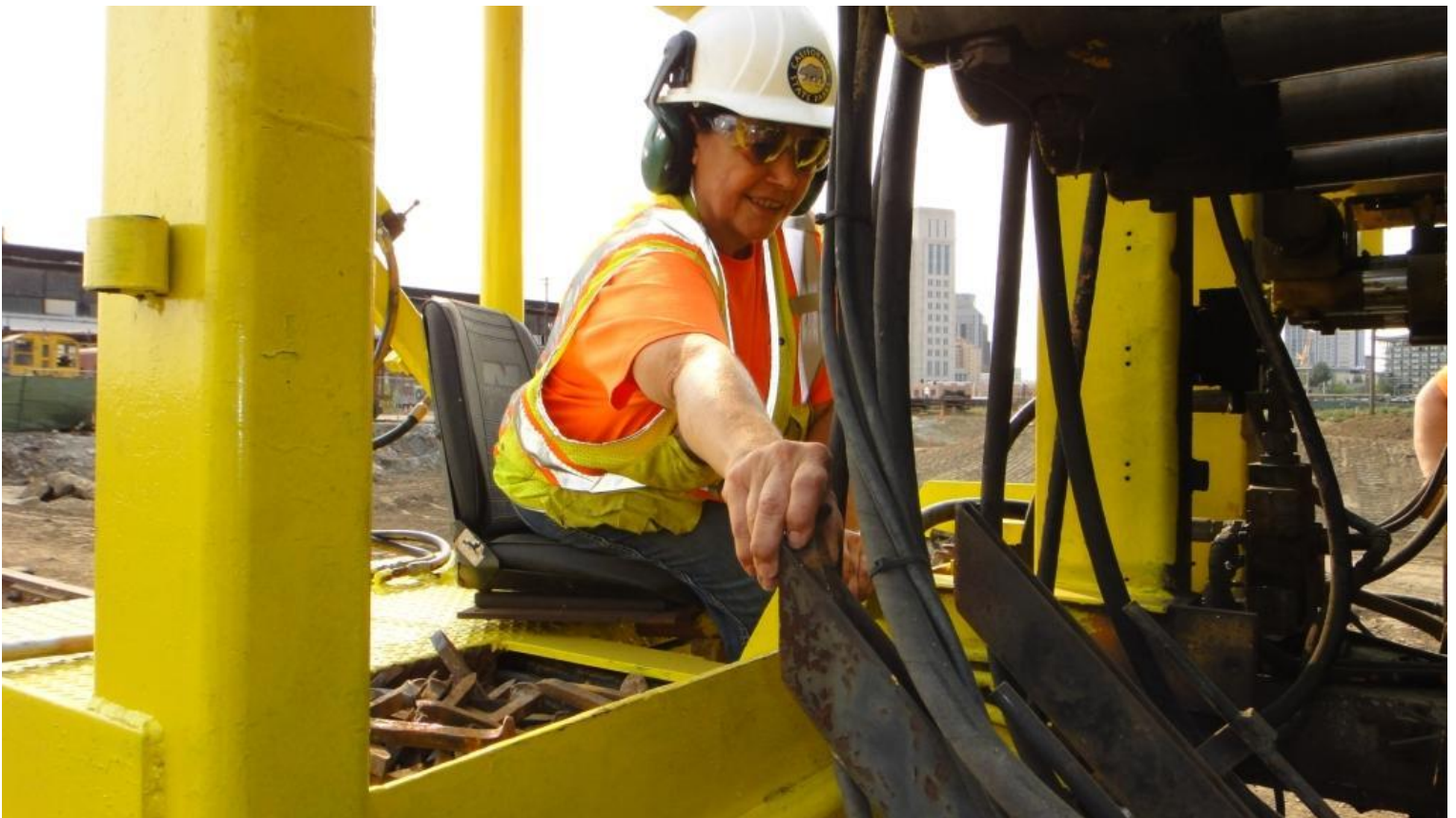


Bring in the Super "B": Mike H. pilots the spiker onto the new track to begin driving spikes into these hard oak ties





Pam loads spikes into the chute for Mike T. to drive into the ties

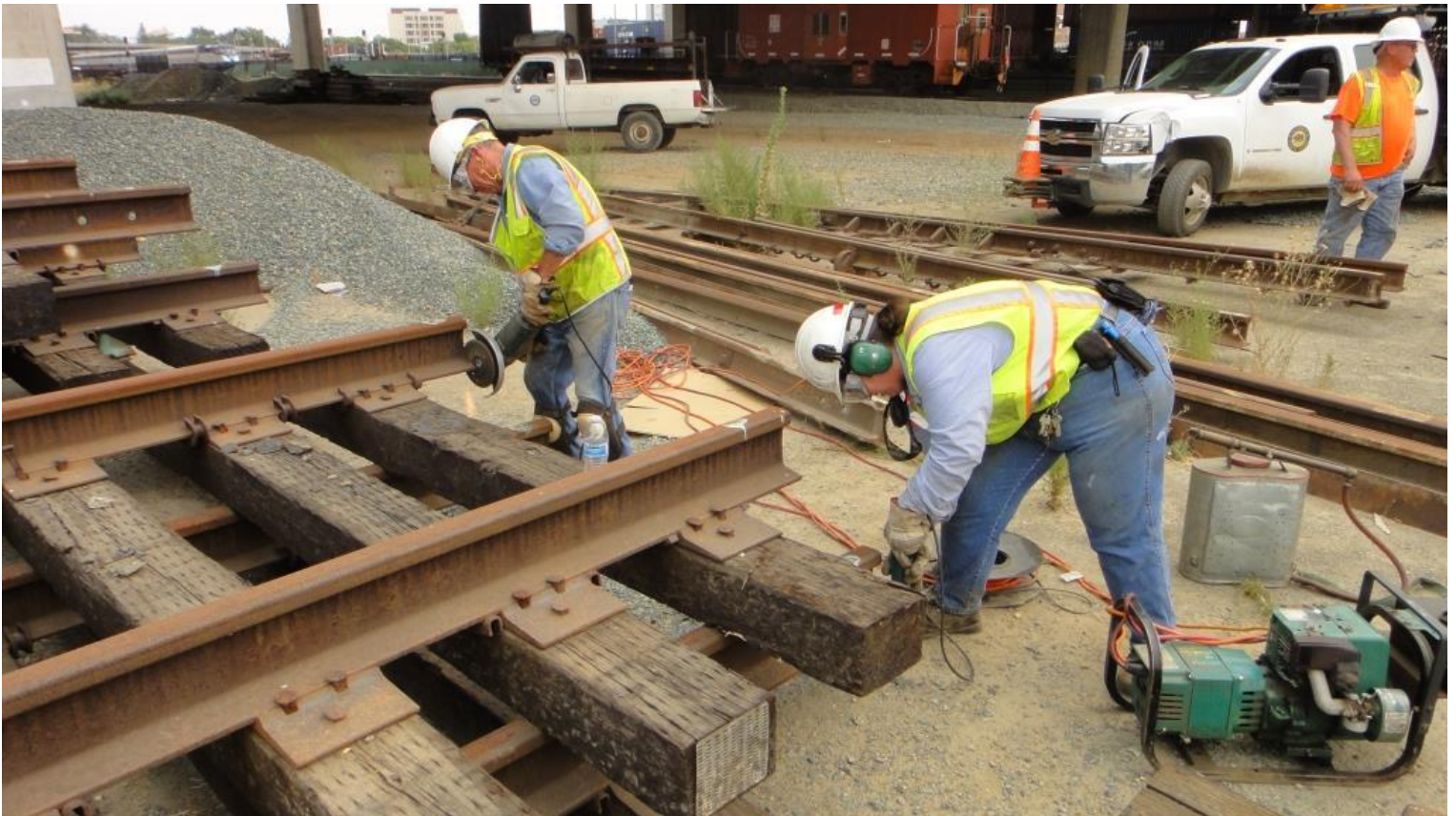


Pam loading spikes into the chutes





Al grinding the nubs off of the rail-ends



Mike T. and Heather grinding nubs off the rail-ends





Al in the loader and Mike H. on Big Green lift the panel of track for its move



"Over hill, over dale; Thorough bush, thorough brier..." Al and Mike T. moving panel track in a choreographed dance...





Perfect! Mike T. lining two panels of track together



Phase two of the operation...