

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for September 20, 2014. The MOW Team really “shook” things up this week – literally. Amongst other things, several machines were taken on “shake-down cruises” following major refit. So, let’s not stand still here. Let’s get this update shaking.

The Nuisance Weed Team is slated to commence its autumn activities on the SSRR Mainline this coming Tuesday (more on that later). So, to prepare, Weedies Heather Kearns and Dave Megeath met up in Old Sacramento to fire-up the chipper to make sure it was functioning properly. Since last used on the line, the chipper has undergone a replacement of its chipping blades. So, Weedies Heather and Dave decided to give it a “shake-down”. Dave unveiled the Team’s new Husqvarna Pole Saw and gave it a whirl excising tree branches encroaching on the right of way in Old Sac. Well, the saw worked beautifully and the chipper chipped like never before. It was a very impressive performance by both machines.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Alan Hardy, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Steve Nemeth, Mike Harris, and Frank Werry were on hand for another successful evening of progress. Mike H. is continuing his tireless efforts at the restoration of the Kalamazoo tug. Right now, he’s re-wiring the machine which is a challenging task. Steve, Fred, Frank, and Alan, took apart and removed the shroud over the engine of the tie-shear (where the theory of gravity was proved once again). We need to gain access to the hydraulic pumps which necessitated the removal of the shroud. Pat got dirty but didn’t fall down. Cliff began welding-up protective cages for the lights and horn on the Kalamazoo. Yes, the Erecting Shop was shaking with activity.

Thursday, Matt Blackburn, Frank, Cliff, Mike H., Alan, and Heather stopped by for some MOW fun. At MOW, we’re big on the whole concept of “reduce, reuse, and recycle” – well, the “reuse and recycle” part at least. We’re converting a prehistoric tamping machine into a ballast car and Matt, Frank, Alan, and Heather started removing the unwanted bits. In order to access the bolts holding the hydraulic tank, the diesel tank under the machine needed to come off. Matt volunteered to slither down into the pit under the machine to pull the tank. He did an incredible job squeezing himself into awkward positions in a very confined space. Mike H. continued the re-wiring of the Kalamazoo. He hooked up a battery to test the headlights, gumball light, and red-lights. All sparked to life and all switches worked as they should. Luckily, Cliff is making protective cages for the lights and horn, which he continued building on Thursday, to protect Mike’s work from the vandals who marauder through Old Sacramento. Yes, it was another good evening.

Saturday started early with the big doors of the Erecting Shop’s Bay 4 swinging open and the Transfer Table being brought into position even before doughnuts arrived. The New-old Tamper was being taken out on its maiden “shake-down cruise” on the SSRR Mainline. Conductor Frank, Alan, Steve, Chris Carlson, Michael Florentine, Fred, Heather, Clem Meier, Harry Voss, and John Rexroth all showed up for the great event. Conductor Frank made the necessary calls to Omaha to send the tamper over to Old Sac. The plan for the day was to correct a couple of issue out on the line identified by our trusty track inspectors. The west switch point at Switch 16 (south Miller Park) was not fitting snugly against the stock-rail. The diagnosis was that the stock-rail was lower than the switch-point and needed to be raised. We felt this would be a good test of the New-old Tamper which has quite a bit more “oomph” than the Old-old Tamper. A ballast tamper is a machine with work-heads that descend into the ground around ties and vibrate violently to pack (or tamp) the ballast under the tie thus making the tracks more durable. Alan, at the controls, demonstrated the capabilities of this restored machine. The effort paid off as the switch throws properly again. Next, we deployed it further south to Baths where several joints were “floating” above the ties. The New-old Tamper made quick work of the situation. Although we identified a few issues with the tamper that still need to be tackled, the “shake-down” was a success! Of course, that the purpose of a “shake-down” operation – to identify any remaining bugs before full deployment. Meanwhile, the Team collected the dead ties that were strewn about next to the track at Miller Park and sent them down to the dead-tie pile at Setzer.

In the afternoon, Fred, Chris, and Alan worked in the Shops on the Tie-shear. Frank, Steve, Heather, John and Mike F. headed over to Old Sac. to make several yard moves of our equipment in order to send the ballast hopper cars over to the Shops for painting and to assemble the Weed Team’s chipper, flat-cars, and man-lift train in the right order. This required the repositioning of every piece of MOW equipment in Old Sacramento multiple times. It took a bit longer than anticipated. Thankfully, Steve, Mike F., John, Heather, and Frank are all experienced and qualified equipment operators allowing us to make multiple moves simultaneously. Railroad DSLE Jeremy Levish joined us in our yard moves and helped every step of the way, including pushing the flat-cars onto the North Turntable Lead by hand and with the put-away of the MOW work-consist in the container. Thank you, Jeremy!

Now on to the week ahead. The Weed Team will meet at the Shops on Tuesday at 8:30 a.m. to begin trimming low-hanging branches that could interfere with the Polar Express Santa’s Village transit South. Tuesday and Thursday the evening crews will meet in the Erecting Shop at 5 o’clock p.m. sharp. Saturday, the doughnut call comes at 8 o’clock a.m. It should be another good week. Hope to see you there!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard



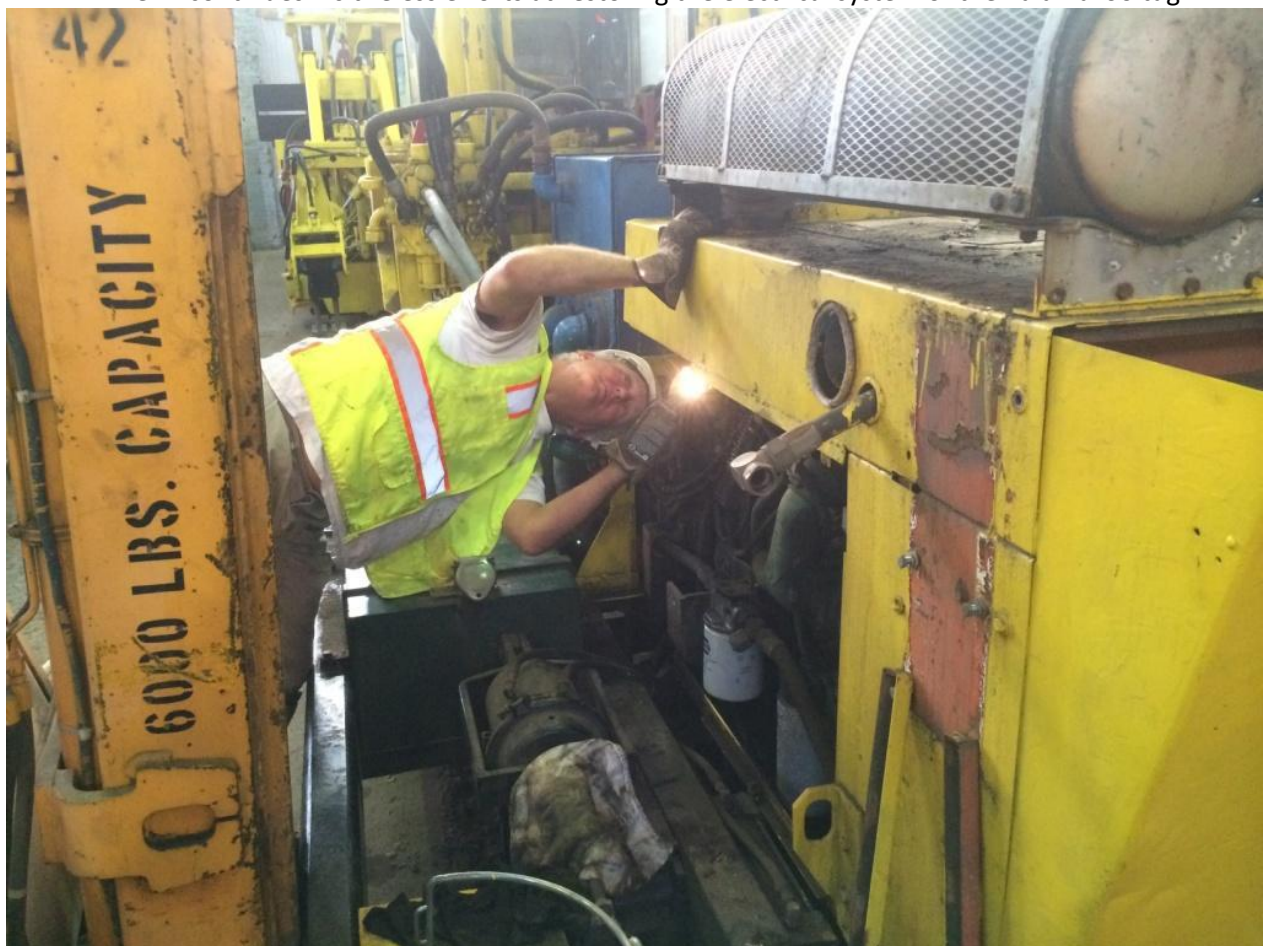
Dave giving the new Husqvarna pole saw a whirl



Lots of formerly green stuff for the chipper to chip on its post re-fit shake-down...



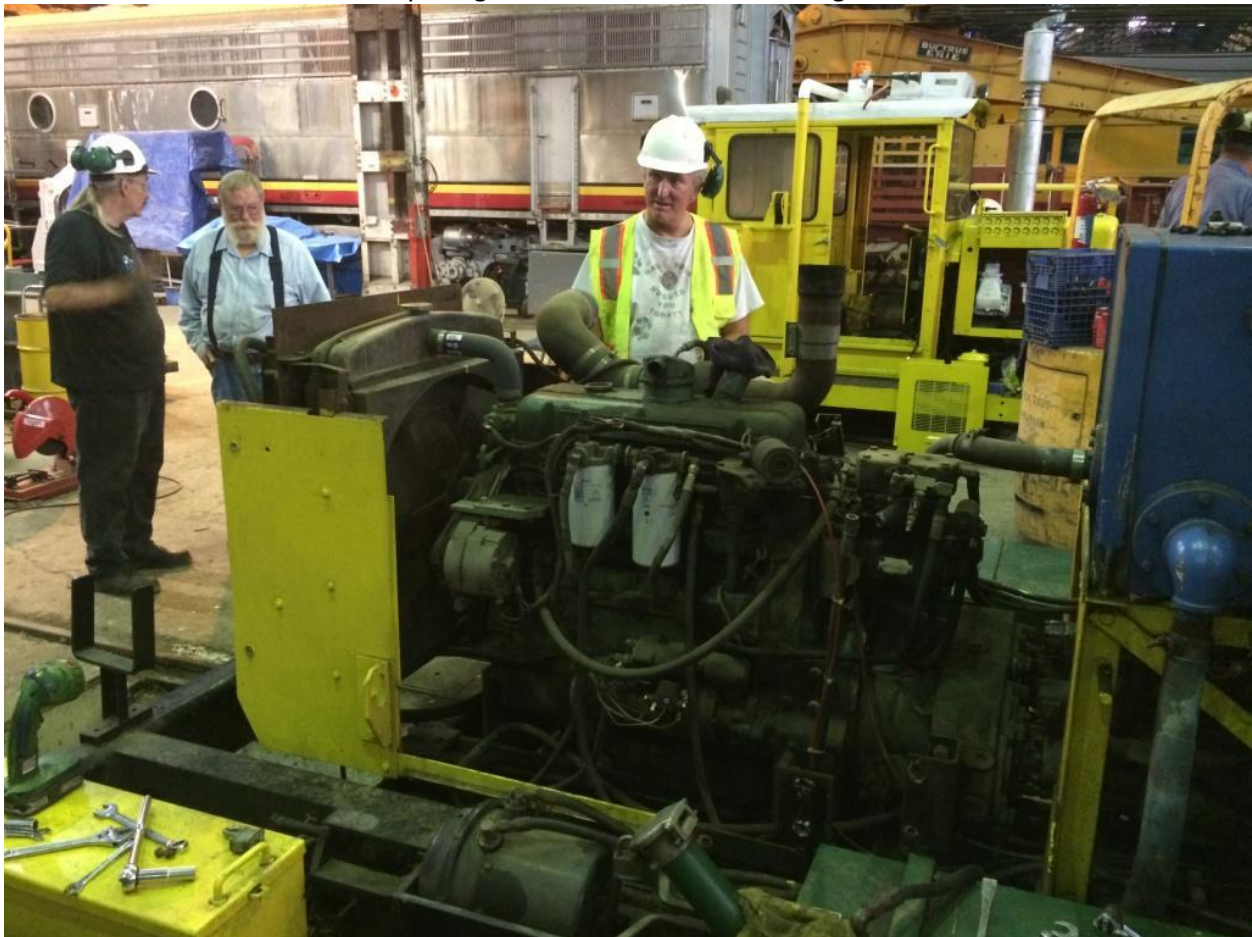
Mike H. continues his tireless efforts at restoring the electrical system of the Kalamazoo tug



Steve finds the final bolts fastening the shroud of the shear to the frame



Alan and Steve pulling the shroud from over the engine of the shear



Success! The shroud over the engine is removed for easier access



Matt emerges from the pit of despair. Don't worry. We sent him back down...



Matt in the pit unlashes the bolts holding the fuel tank on the really old prehistoric tamper



Let there be light! The electricians on the Kalamazoo are working once again thanks to Mike H.



The new-old tamper makes its debut in Old Sacramento, ready to embark on its "shake-down" cruise



The new-old tamper “shaking-up” the ties to the north of the points at Switch 16



Steve and Frank, along with the rest of the crew, load dead ties we’ve pulled out onto the flat cars



Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Harry, Chris, and Fred fire-up the tie-shear to trouble-shoot the hydraulic problem



First shake-down cruise complete, Conductor Frank makes the call to Omaha requesting a green light to send the New-old Tamper and hopper-cars back over to the Yards