

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for September 20, 2015. We picked up where we left off last week with the track building project. So, before we forget where we are, let's get this thing started.

Tree-trimming season officially commenced on Tuesday. Now that the purple-martins have finished doing whatever it is purple-martins do in the spring and summer, the Weed Team was free to start choppin' wayward limbs fouling the right-of-way. First stop, Old Sacramento where Heather Kearns piloted the man-lift and Mike Taylor went flying in the bucket. They worked their way along the Old Main trimming trees from Switch 4 to Switch 10 then cleared up the debris with the chipper which has new chipping blades. All in all, a very successful day.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Gene Peck, Alan Hardy, Frank Werry, and Mike Harris, kept things buzzing. Frank and Mike H. headed over to Old Sacramento to bring the Kalamazoo tug and the ballast hopper cars over to the Shops side. The Team had hoped to start ballasting the new storage track we're building from the old Firing Line out to under the freeway this week. After spinning one of the side-dump cars around so it would drop rock in the right direction, Mike H. and Frank executed a smooth operation across the UP Main. Previously, a brake-handle on the center-dump ballast car had broken-off and needed to be welded back on. It also had a bad wheel that needed replacing. When Frank and Mike H. got the cars back to the Shops, Pat and Cliff were waiting and ready to weld the brake handle on. We'd replace the wheel on Thursday. With the job done, the equipment was spotted on the Firing Line ready to go.

Thursday, Alan spent much of the day staging materials for the track-build project. Then, he, Frank, and Heather took on replacing the bad wheel on the center-dump hopper car. This was a dirty job that required one person to shimmy under the hopper to prevent the nuts from spinning by holding them with a box-wrench. The bolts holding the wheel on the axle were soaked in Kroil to loosen their grip. Heather brought in the fork-lift to jack-up the end with the bad wheel. Alan then used the impact wrench to torque them loose. Once the wheel was removed, the replacement wheel was installed: one person under the car with the box-wrench holding the nuts in place while the impact spun on the bolts. Everyone was quite dirty by the time the replacement wheel was in place but pleased with the accomplishment.

Saturday featured more doughnuts than people. Seven folks were on hand for the continuation of the storage track building project in the Rail Yards. Steve Nemeth, Alan, Frank, and three Mikes: Florentine, Willis, and Harris. The environmental mitigation company that is digging up all the toxic dirt in the Rail Yards gave us the green-light to connect the two segments of track we had built over the previous two weeks. Steve climbed up on the Big Green Machine and Mike H. took out the front-end loader. Mike W. brought out our trusty Chevy Truck with all the tools. Steve grabbed a bundle of ties which were laid-out approximately 20 inches apart by Frank and the three Mikes. Then, Steve headed over to the rail-pile to grab several nice sticks of 39-foot long 110 pound track. Mike F. guided the rail through the obstacle course that the Rail Yards have become. The rails were laid abutting against the ends of the existing track on the east leading to the Firing Line. Frank, Alan, Mike W, and Mike H. got the joint-bars set and bolts to connect the rails. Mike W. used a track-jack to get the rail-ends to line. To gauge the track, the Team took up "Gandy Dancing" again this week. In some areas, the rails need to be spread and, in others, pinched. It was spiked by hand every sixth tie or so. Now the track was in gauge, it needed to be curved to line it up with the portion of the track we had put down last week. Big Green and the loader were brought in to push and pull the track into its proper curve. In a coordinated effort, the two machines curved the track around so that it would meet up with the western end under the freeway. The meeting point of the two segments was only off by about eight inches. Not bad for track that was positioned based solely on line of sight.

Meanwhile, down at Sutterville Road, Mike T. and Dave Megeath undertook a special Saturday Weed Team adventure. They were so excited by the opening of tree-trimming season that they couldn't wait to get out there. Mike T. and Dave took the man-lift and chipper to clear that portion of the line of miscreant limbs.

After lunch, three folks needed to take off. The diminished crew coupled with a mechanical issue experienced over at the Shops when deploying the Nordberg Super "B" spiker limited our afternoon productivity somewhat. Steve on Big Green and Mike H. in the loader did attempt to reposition the track segments built last week. However, more work on that will need to be done. Once things got cleared up in the Shops, Mike H. and Frank used the rail-lifter to square-up ties and place tie-plates. Then, Mike H. and Alan brought in the Super "B" to spike down the new segments. It went well. The spiker is its worth. It was a great acquisition. However, due to short crews and mechanical issues, we didn't get quite as much done as we had hoped. Still, we're on course to finish this thing up in the next week or so. Essentially, we need to do a little repositioning of the panel track laid out last week. Next, the Team will cut the last segment of rail connecting the two portions of track and drill bolt holes in the ends of about eight sticks of rail. Then we'll drop some ballast on the line to provide stability and a level surface and tamp it all up. It's an important project for the Museum and we're getting there.

This coming week, the Weed Team will meet on Tuesday for more tree-trimming fun. The bulk of their day will be spent on the Setzer lead. Meet at the Shops at 8:30. The Tuesday and Thursday evening crews will gather for more MOW fun at or before 5 o'clock. Saturday, there'll be more track-building starting at 8 o'clock sharp. We could really use some extra help so, please consider joining the fun! Of course, many thanks, as always, to the fantastic all-volunteer MOW Team!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard



Mike T. takes flight over Old Sacramento



Mike T. surveys the good works done by the Weed Team



Mike H. ready to pull the hopper cars over to the Shops with Kalamazoo



Pat and Cliff await the arrival of the hoppers at Bay 4 of the Erecting Shop



Cliff welds the brake handle back on the center dump hopper car



Heather, Alan, and Frank replacing the bad wheel on the hopper car



Mike H. and Mike F. begin placing ties for the remaining section of the Firing Line storage track



Steve nimbly maneuvers through the Rail Yards carrying a 39-foot ton-and-a-half stick of rail which Mike T. guides



Mike H. guides the east end of the rail to match up with the track that's already in place



Mike H. and Alan line up joint bars while Mike W. adjusts the height of the rail with a track jack



"Dan-cin', yeah!" Mike F., Mike W., Frank, and Steve "get-down" for more Gandy Dancin'...



Mike H. in the loader and Steve on Big Green start curving the track



Steve, on Big Green, pushes the track from one end...



...While Mike H. pulls on the other...

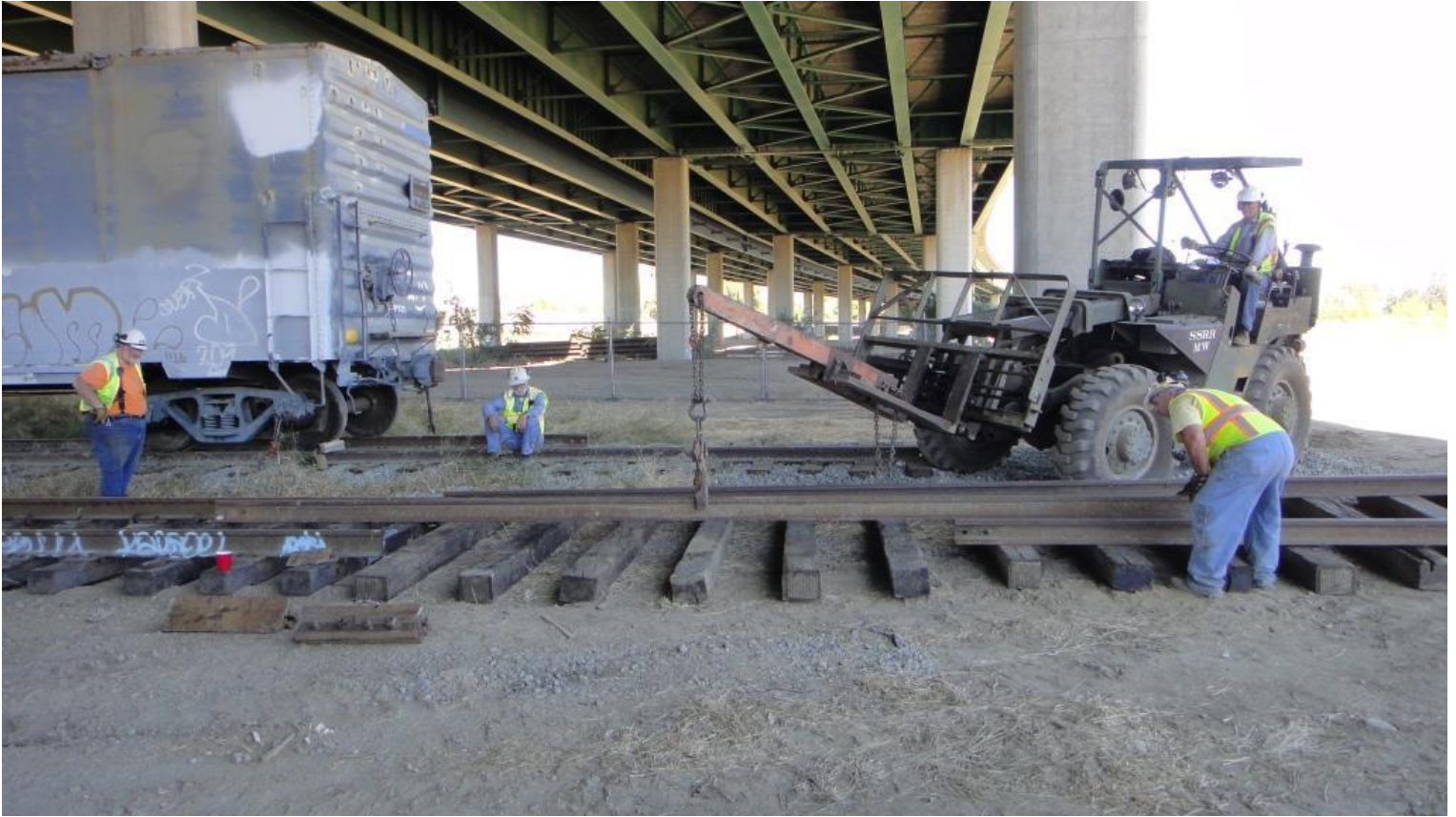




Mike W. and Mike H. connect the two rails with joint bars



Missed it by that much... Not bad, really, as Frank measures the distance the track laid last week (spotted by eye-ball) and the new track



The final piece is brought in (which still needs to be cut)



Frank and Mike H. use the rail-lifter to line ties and place tie-plates



Spiking begins. Mike H. and Alan rev-up the Super B



Mike H. lines up the spike over the hole in the tie-plate