

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for September 28, 2014. This year is just flying by. Already, the whole Railroad is in full Polar Express prep mode. In fact, tickets went on sale this last week. Your MOW Team is contributing to the effort. So, before any more time flits away, let's get this update clicking!

Part of the magic of the Polar Express on our line is that it's a southbound journey to the North Pole. And, in order for Santa's Village to head south to the North Pole (at Baths), it first must be able to clear the trees through Miller Park. That's where the mighty Weed Team comes in. On Tuesday, Mike Taylor, Dave Megeath, Heather Kearns, Josh Ilac, and Jeff Allen began the necessary pruning of wayward branches that might interfere with Santa's Village passage to Baths in one piece. Dave took flight like one of Santa's reindeer in the man-lift's bucket while the rest of the crew scooped the debris and fed it into the chipper (with its new blades). Although there's more to do, the Nuisance Weed Team has made a great start at it.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, activity abounded as Alan Hardy, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Gene Peck, Frank Werry, Chris Carlson, and Mike Harris got some mighty good work done. Pat and Cliff built and welded lift-tubes onto the section gang machine that should make it easier to lift back onto the track should it derail (which it does often). Chris, Fred, and Gene worked on the Tie-shear's hydraulic system, still trying to track down the cause of the hydraulic failure. Frank and Alan resumed stripping down the prehistoric tamper to its deck. It's being converted into a ballast car. Mike H. continued the wiring of the Kalamazoo. Wow. So much was going on that it was difficult to "keep track" of it all...

Thursday, Harry Voss, Frank, Heather, Mike H., and Alan kept up the pace on progress. Frank and Alan managed to remove both the transmission and diesel engine of the prehistoric tamper. Heather rewired the front-facing red-lights on the New-old Tamper. These lights were cutting-out on us during the first shake-down cruise last week. Thanks to Heather, they're now functioning as they should. Mike H. and Harry continued on the Kalamazoo's wiring. It's down to the "wire" for the Kalamazoo in its conversion into a tug. Just a few things left on the check-off list yet to do thanks mostly to Mike H.

There were plenty of doughnuts to go around on Saturday morning as Alan, Clem Meier, Pam Tatro, Fred, Frank, Chris, Harry, Heather, and Michael Florentine arrived on scene. The plan for the day was to take the Jackson 3000 Tamper ( a.k.a. the "New-old" tamper) across the UP Main and over to Old Sacramento for another day of testing out on the line. Also, the Team took the opportunity to collect the bevy of dead ties strewn along the Mainline from our previous tie replacement efforts and take them down to our Setzer Yard for disposal. Chris and Harry stayed at the Shops to work on mechanical projects. The Jackson 3000 Tamper, or "J3K" (a cooler name for the "New-old Tamper," as well as fewer characters to type), was spotted on the Miller Park Siding. In the meantime, Mike F. piloted the A-6 motorcar pulling three flatcars along the Main through Miller Park where Pam, Clem, Fred, and Heather loaded them up with dead ties which they took to Setzer for disposal. The fun came when Alan demonstrated the jacking system of the J3K for the first time. With the jacks deployed, the rail-grabs grabbed the rails. Then Alan nimbly engaged the jacks to lift the track up several inches. With the tamping heads powered-up, they descended into the ground to tamp the raised track. It was a great success and worked exactly as designed. The operation was repeated over a segment of track in order to provide the proper run-off for the raised section. This capability is a tremendous advancement for us. Along with the light-reference system, currently under restoration, we'll be able to mechanize track-raises. Whereas previously, we had to use individual track jacks under each tie and a spot board to raise about 30 feet of track (not to mention the heavy labor involved), the J3K will be able to raise entire sections of track all by itself. Now all we need is a train-load of ballast...

In the afternoon, Fred, Chris, and Alan did lots of great work in the Shops. Chris and Fred managed to pull the hydraulic pumps on the tie-shear which involved taking apart half the machine. Alan made repairs to the flatcars. Heather and Frank headed over to Old Sacramento to clear some defects reported by our trusty track inspectors – a loose joint to the north of the Stub Switch as well as a couple loose bolts in the heels of two other switches. It was a good day for your MOW Team.

For the week ahead, the Weed Team will be continuing its gallant efforts on Tuesday. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. On Tuesday and Thursday evenings, the Shops will be open for business starting at 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday was to be the start of our big tie change-out but, the new ties – which have been ordered – may not arrive in time. Therefore, we're planning other activities, instead. It should be a good day, nonetheless. Doughnuts will be served starting at 8 o'clock a.m. Again, many thanks to all the tremendous folks who volunteer to undertake the hard labor and often frustrating mechanical work that keeps our operation alive – which, in turn keeps the trains rolling. Always remember, no track, no trains.

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



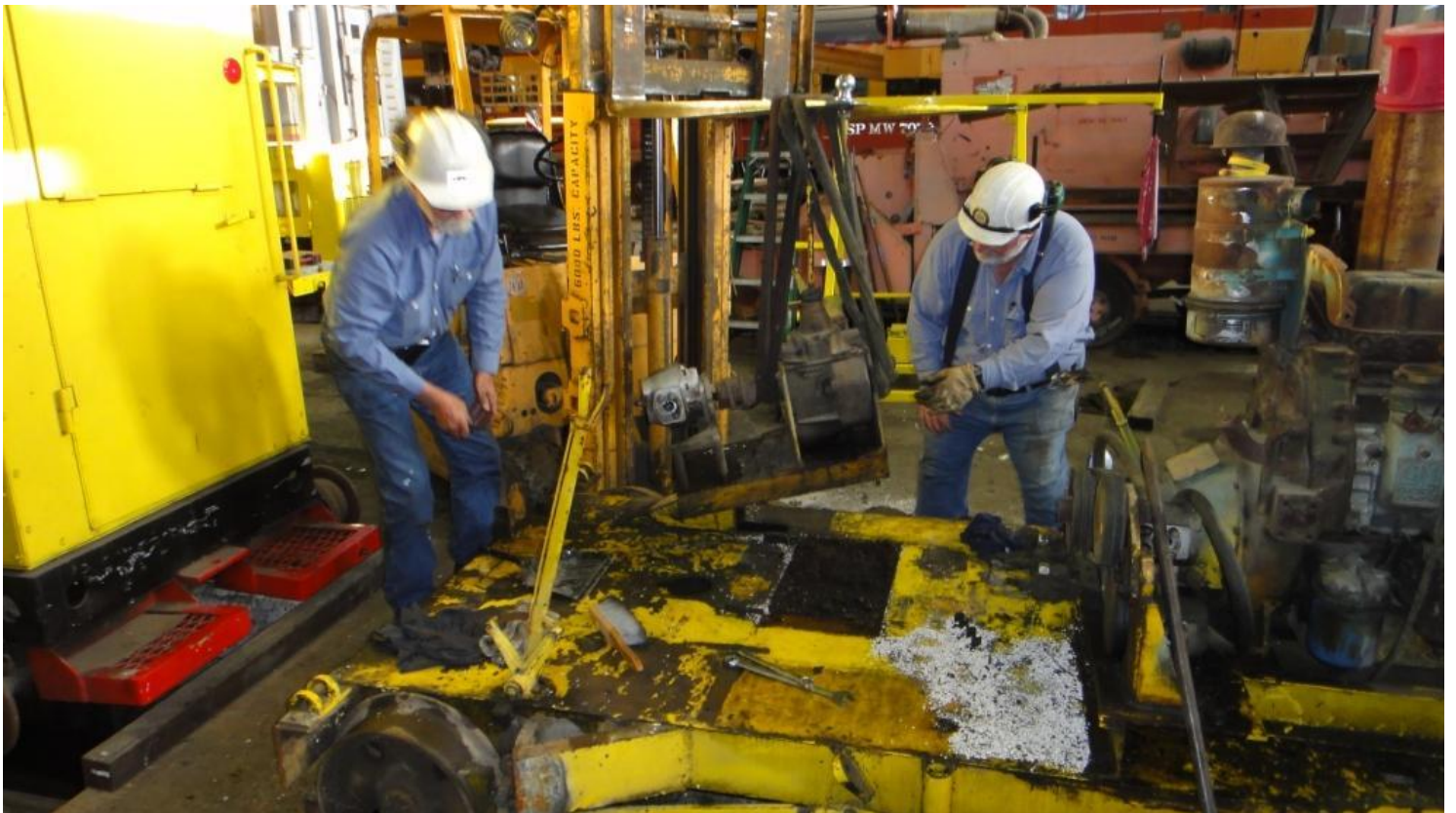
Dave, Josh, Mike T., and the chipper make quick work of the green debris



Dave flies over the SSRR Mainline like one of Santa's reindeer in the bucket of the MOW Team's trusty man-lift



Alan shutting down the New-old Tamper, a.k.a. the "J3K", after a test of its electrical system



Alan and Frank remove the transmission from the prehistoric tamper ala ballast car



Next, the old GM Diesel is removed



Heather rewiring the front-end red-lights of the J3K Tamper. Notice the nice protective cage that Cliff made.



Mike F. pilots the MOW Team's work-train as we collect dead ties along the line



Your MOW Team at work: Frank, Fred, Pam, Heather, and Mike F., make a great team!



Alan bringing the lifting jack of the J3K into position



The rail-grabs are engaged as the jacks are deployed



The track has been jacked



Clem demonstrates how high the J3K lifted the track – now if we only had some ballast...



Meanwhile, down at Setzer, Frank, Fred, Clem, Heather, and Pam dispose of dead ties



Frank and Heather secure a loose joint-bar near the stub switch