

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 8, 2016. Well, the drought is over – at least in the Boiler Shop. Yes, another week of rain may have fallen inside the building but, didn't dampen your MOW Team's mood. So, let's get things started before we get all wet.

The wind and the rain had the old rafters of the Erecting Shop rattling Tuesday night. And, as they say, the best thing one can do when it's raining is to let it rain. So, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Mike Taylor, Heather Kearns, Weston Snyder, Joe Margucci, Anthony Filamor, Alan Hardy, Frank Werry, Gene Peck, and Harry Voss kept themselves under the tin-roof for the evening. Mike T. spent much of the day preparing for the Weed Team's weed-spraying season which commences in the next several weeks. You may recall that, last week, the Team undertook emergency triage on the switch-stand and head-block at Switch 2 (House Track) after something ran into it. The resulting damage shattered the head-block where the stand is spiked to it. But, there is still solid wood on either side of the damaged area. So, Alan located a replacement switch-stand with a much longer base that will allow us to spike it down where the wood is solid. This stand had been salvaged from the Rail Yards and both the mast and base were bent. So, Cliff fired-up his torch and heated the crooked bits until they were malleable enough for Anthony, Frank, and Alan to straighten with sledge-hammers and pipes. Joe and Heather worked on tracing down an electrical "parasite" on the ballast-regulator that keeps killing the battery. In addition, the Team serviced the A-6 motorcar, the A-5 motorcar, the blue tractor, and the spiker. By 8 o'clock, the tin roof had stopped talkin' – temporarily at least – so, the called it a night.

Thursday was clear but crisp and cool. Joe, Anthony, and Frank proved their hearty spirits by being on hand to welcome Paul Jansson as the newest member of the Team. Welcome to MOW, Paul! It was baptism by fire for Paul as the task for the evening was to reconstruct the temporary track to the east of the Firing Line across the transfer table runway so that the Shops' Crew could move the dynamometer-car, which had been spotted on the South track of the Firing Line since the extraction of the rotary snow plow, back to the North Firing Line track. The temporary track had been partially dismantled following the big move of the rotary to make room for the transfer-table in the area. Anthony climbed aboard the forklift and grabbed the panel-track lifter and attached it to the portion of the track being moved. Frank and Joe guided the repositioning of the track from each end of the track to achieve the most advantageous alignment for hooking up to the other sections. Moving track in this manner is a bit tricky because it curves and then tends to spring-back to its original position once the forklift releases it. So, a second forklift was brought in to shove the rails on the opposite end as Anthony with the panel-track lifter pulled. The Team then got the ends second section of temporary track lined up with the first. Paul, Joe, and Frank attached joint-bars and tightened-down bolts. Anthony on the forklift had to shimmy the track a little to help line-up the bolt holes. But, by the end of the evening, the entire track had been reassembled and was ready for dynamometer-car to move onto it.

Saturday, there were no doughnuts. In fact, there was no MOW. After multiple, lengthy discussions on Friday by the high track-monkey mucky-mucks, the decision was made to cancel MOW activity for Saturday. Partly, this was in deference to this week's looming "mega-storm of the century." In stormy weather, the Boiler Shop is closed-down and power shut off. Deploying equipment from the Boiler Shop in such conditions becomes a major challenge. But, other factors played into the decision, as well. We had anticipated that the tamper's malfunctioning hydraulic vibrator motors and assemblies, which we had sent out to a professional hydraulic repair and fabrication facility, were going to be returned to us last week. That did not happen so the tamper could not be restored to operation. Thus, tie changing and track-raising projects could not proceed. We also anticipated that the new wing-rails for the frog at Switch 19, which are being milled and machined by a professional industrial repair and fabrication company would be ready for pick-up and installation, as well. Well, they were not ready and, as we learned, it will take more time than expected due to certain challenges the company had with this work. Some other projects on the books could not be worked-on due to various logistical impediments that popped up during the week. So, reluctantly, rather than gather for minor projects in the cold and damp Erecting Shop, the decision was made to call-off MOW on Saturday.

But, that's not to say that all hands were idle. You MOW Team high track-monkey mucky mucks, Alan, Chris Carlson, and Frank, spent Saturday sequestered in the Big Four conference room at the Museum drafting new machine-operating rules and training protocols that will comply with the latest federal regulations for track workers. Also, provisions of the General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) and federal regulations in Part 214 "Roadway Worker Safety" that apply to the operation of track machines were reviewed for inclusion in the new machine-operating rules and training protocols being developed. Furthermore, planning for implementing the new federal regulations regarding drug and alcohol testing of track workers was discussed. In the end, this program will formalize and document the qualifications and certifications of machine operators working out on the SSRR Mainline and should provide an even safer working environment for those volunteering with MOW. Of course, for members of the MOW Team, it means additional bureaucracy, rules, training, and examinations – this time, not "open-book." Well, you know the old Proverb – *idle hands are the devil's workshop...* More on this will be unveiled in the weeks ahead. Indeed, for the high mucky-mucks of the track-monkeys, it was a productive day.

This coming week, we do anticipate the return of the tamper's hydraulic vibrator motors which will need to be re-installed. Crews will gather on Tuesday and Thursday at or before 5 o'clock. The mighty Weed Team is planning on reconvening for its first deployment of 2017 on Thursday (weather permitting). Saturday, we'll be back to work as usual and doughnuts will return to the Erecting Shops by 8 o'clock a.m. Many thanks to everyone for their patience and understanding with the situation last Saturday.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Cliff heats the base of the replacement switch-stand for Switch 2 in order to bend it straight



Anthony and Frank work with Cliff on straightening the bent bits of the switch-stand



Heather hunting down the electrical “parasite” on the ballast regulator



Anthony uses the forklift to attach the panel-track lifter to the section of temporary track being moved out on the transfer table runway



Paul stands by to relay signals as Anthony on the forklift lifts the rails



Frank guides the lining of the temporary track to the South Firing-Line track



With the first section of track lined-up, Paul and Frank guide Anthony in grabbing the panel-track lifter to move the second section



The second section is dragged over to meet up with the first section



After attaching joint-bars, Frank and Paul tighten down the bolts



High mucky-mucks of the track monkeys, Alan, Chris, and Frank, work diligently to draft more rules and tests for your MOW Team