

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 11, 2015. This was the first full week of 2015 and, it goes without saying, that the Team did some great things. But, before we become too engrossed in our own greatness, let's get this update started...

The Mighty Weed Team lit the torch on its 2015 season by gathering in Old Sacramento on Tuesday. Mike Taylor, Dave Megeath, Heather Kearns, and Joe Galipeau bore witness to all kinds of fun switching of railroad cars and locomotives as the freight crew put everything back to right after the Governor's swanky ball in the Roundhouse on Monday. Amongst other things, the Weedies pulled their equipment out of the MOW container to service. They're preparing for a big year of great things and needed to make sure all was in order. This week, they'll be heading to Hood for the first time this year to take on blackberry vines. It will be a good day.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Alan Hardy, Frederick Carr, Scott Morrison, Mike Harris, Frank Werry, and Gene Peck are doing an impressive job of bringing our track machinery back to life. The re-construction of the tie-shear is going great gangbusters and the whole Team got into the action of re-installing the hydraulic tank. Alan on the forklift brought the tank and mounting bracket over to the machine. In a tricky maneuver, Scott, Fred, Mike H., Gene, guided it in place. It took a couple of shots but, by evening's end, the hydraulic tank was back in place and ready to be plumbed. Various new valves and fittings have been ordered which will be installed upon delivery. It's looking more and more likely that the tie-shear will be fully operational very soon.

Thursday, Gene, Alan, Heather, Scott, Fred, Frank, and Mike H. kept the gangbusters going great. Gene, Scott, Fred, and Alan picked up where they left off on Tuesday with the plumbing of the tie-shear's hydraulic system. Mike H. and Frank got working on the Kalamazoo tug. Work on the Kalamazoo is just about completed and it was time to see if it would start. Frank and Mike H. filled the hydraulic tank with hydraulic fluid and the fuel tank with diesel. They flicked the switch and turned the key. Shazam! It fired right up. Gene had tuned it up and adjusted the valves some weeks ago. And when it started, it purred. In fact, from the sound of the engine, it was hard to believe that it's a 50 year old machine. Also on Thursday, Heather took apart one of the "huff-and-puff" machines (leaf-blower) to replace the head-gasket. By evening's end, the huff-and-puff machine was puffing and huffing once again. Yes, it was an evening of great success.

Doughnuts arrived right on time Saturday morning and Clem Meier, Heather, Steve Nemeth, Harry Voss, Alan, the three Mikes – Mike H., Mike T., and Michael Florentine – Pam Tatro, Fred, Frank, and Ed Moriarty were there to make quick work of them. The plan for the day called for the re-gauging of Track 2 leading into the Central Pacific Passenger Station in Old Sacramento. Our track inspectors have been keeping an eye on this particular track for some time because the gauge was a bit wide. Although never reaching the point of a "defect" as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 49 Part 213.53(b), recently, they noticed, it appeared to be "creeping" ever wider. That's it. Time to call in the MOW Team. We decided to re-gauge the track using gauge-rods. The interesting thing about this particular track is that is relatively small 60 pound rail sitting atop soft redwood ties. It is a historical recreation of an 1860's railroad track. Despite its historic nature, it is used by a modern railroad and 90 ton locomotives roll over it quite often. With that, Fred, Frank, Pam, and Clem began by digging out the areas between the ties where the rods would be installed. We would gauge off the west rail so the spikes were pulled along the east rail. Steve, Mike T., and Mike H. pulled spikes and plugged the old spike holes. The rods were inserted, clamped to the rails and then adjusted so that they would pull the east rail closer to west rail. The east rail by needed to move an inch to an inch and a half in some areas. It did just like it was supposed to and, as a result, a more perfect curve was created. Next, the tie-plates needed to be moved so that the outside shoulder would help hold gauge and be flush with the base of the rail. This was a bit of a struggle as, over the years and under load, they had cut their way below the surface of the tie. Steve and Alan had to use an adze to shave the top of nearly every tie in the area. This took a great deal of time. But by the end of the day, the track was perfectly gauged and much safer for train crews and heavy railroad equipment to use. Chalk up another great success to the MOW Team!

Also on Saturday, Heather headed-up an organic debris mitigation program. She, Ed, Clem, and Steve, removed what appeared to be millions of leaves from Switch 2 – the House Track switch. In fact, Heather spent the whole day removing dead leaves from the various switches around Old Sacramento with the huff-and-puff machine. Furthermore, the Team made a presentation at the Railroad's annual General Meeting which featured the MOW Team's "greatest hits" from 2014 and its "great expectations" for 2015. Then, we joined the rest of the Railroad Crew for the annual Crew Photo (for which we practiced earlier). All in all, it was a great day for the MOW Team.

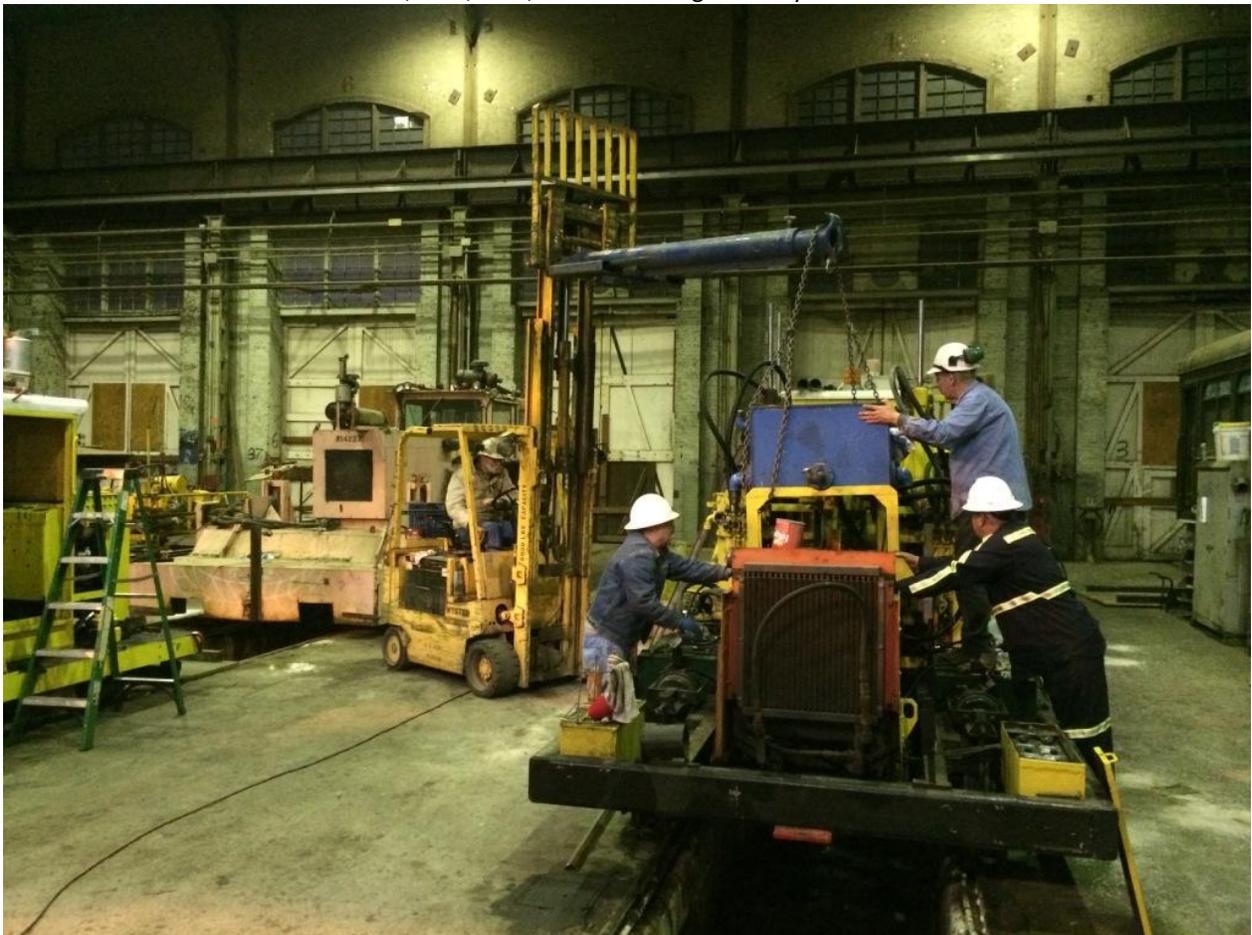
This coming week, the Weed Team will be spraying blackberry vines and/or trimming trees at Hood. Meet at the Shop at 8:30 AM. In the afternoon and evening on Tuesday, the Team will meet as usual to continue with the great progress on many projects. Thursday, more Shops fun commences at 5 o'clock p.m. Next Saturday, the scent of fresh warm doughnuts will fill inundate the Erecting Shop promptly at 8 o'clock a.m. Whether or not the weather is wet, it is likely we'll be out on the line making the Railroad safe for democracy. To all our tremendous volunteers who give so much to this program, thank you for your dedication. Based on the warm reception the Team received at the General Meeting, it is evident that the entire Railroad family understands and appreciates the great work you do. Again, many thanks to all our volunteers and supporters. You make the railroad possible. Always remember, no track, no train.

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Mike H., Alan, Fred, and Scott bring in the hydraulic tank



Getting the tank into position



Frank pours hydraulic from the 55 gallon drum which Mike H. will then add to the Kalamazoo's hydraulic tank



Hydraulic tank fill, diesel added, the Kalamazoo fired right up and is running. In no time, this machine will be out on the line



The Team gets to work on digging between the ties to insert gauge-rods on Track 2 into the CPPS



Steve and Mike H. pull spikes on the adjacent ties to allow for the lateral movement of the rail



Mike F. and Steve plug the old spike-holes before the rail gauge is adjusted



Your MOW Team at work installing five gauge-rods



Like all MOW Team volunteers, Pam is happy in her work!



Because these redwood ties were pretty plate-cut, Alan brought in the adze to shave off the top of the tie so that the rail could be moved



Heather, Clem, and Ed cleaned out Switch 2 which was buried in organic debris



Mike F. lying down on the job...



The MOW Team puts on a show as the fifth and final gauge-rod is installed



Your MOW Team (from left) Frank, Heather, Ed, Steve, Clem, Pam, Mike F., Fred, Alan, Mike H., and Harry, practice for the SSRR Crew photo that followed the General Meeting.