

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 18, 2016. Rain, wind, mud, and lots of good productive activity were the highlights of your MOW Team's Week. So, let's not muddy the waters any further and get this update started!

The Mighty MOW Weed Team was busy as beavers this week, both on Tuesday and Thursday, doing what beavers do best: choppin' down trees. Mike Taylor, Heather Kearns, and Dave Megeath continued their adventures on the Hood Line liberating it from the clutches of the dastardly green empire that is quite persistent in its efforts to retake it. But, Mike, Heather, and Dave are equally persistent at keeping the green invasion at bay with their arsenal of big saws, mowers, and loppers. Yep, the Weedies keep the Hood dream alive.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops on Tuesday, Heather Kearns, Cliff Hayes, Pat Scholzen, Frederick Carr, Frank Werry, Mike Harris, Harry Voss, and Gene Peck made the Erecting Shop very light and bright with their presence. Heather disassembled a field-and-brush mower that had been misbehaving of late. She found that the clutch had gone wonky and needed replacing. Fred installed a new fuel pump on the rail-mounted air compressor. He primed the system and, along with Pat and Harry, got the thing fired-up. Mike H. climbed down into the pit beneath the ballast regulator to repair the broom which had been acting up. In no time, he was able to rectify the problem and verified that it now spun freely. Cliff finished up his metallurgic magic on the Weed Team's 65-gallon spray-rig's engine and pump mounting-bracket while Mike T. and Mike H. got the rest of the rig taken apart and prepped it for re-plumbing. All in all, a very productive gathering, indeed.

Thursday, Alan Hardy, Heather, Fred, Mike H. kept up the progress in the Erecting Shop. The Weed Team suspended operations at Hood around 3 o'clock when water started falling from the sky. They returned to the Shops to continue work on re-plumbing the 65-gallon spray-rig. Mike H. and Fred used a small propane torch to expand the hoses in order to make them fit on the fittings. Then, Mike T. began connecting things up. Heather installed a new clutch on the field and brush mower. Alan and Frank mapped-out the plan for our big rail-replacement project south of Front Street which will commence next week (more on that later). Then, Frank set-off on an expedition in the Erecting Shop searching for illusive "compromise" joint-bars for use on the project. "Comp-joints" connect two different sizes of rail, in this case, to connect 110-pound rail with 90-pound rail. These things weigh a ton and required all-hands-on-deck to move them. That wore everyone out so, with the tin roof still talkin', the crew called-it quits and headed home pleased with the accomplishments of the evening.

The MOW Team is preparing to commence its big "off-season" project of up-sizing the rails between Front Street and Switch 14 (North Miller Park Switch). We'll be removing the existing 75-pound rail and replacing it 110-pound rail. Along with new ties, we believe that this new track structure will help mitigate a number of issues we're experiencing with the track over this area. With a project this big, the Team needed to make sure everything is staged and ready to go. Most importantly, the doughnuts were staged for the arrival of Chris Carlson, Alan, Frank, Heather, Michael Florentine, and Harry on Saturday. Alan headed down to Front Street to survey the number of ties slated for replacement. Frank grabbed a couple bundles of ties with the yellow forklift to send over to Old Sacramento. Mike F. on the Big Green Machine waded through the mud to collect a couple 55-gallon drums of red-diesel which he loaded on the MOW Team's trusty Chevy Truck to fuel all machines we intend to use on this project. Over in Old Sac., the Team re-arranged all the machines and got them in the right order for quick deployment next week. The scarifier-inserter needed to head back to the Shops for some necessary servicing. It was buried at the far north end of the old 150-Track behind every other machine. Chris directed the refueling of the tamper, Kalamazoo tug, Jackson 125 tie-exchanger, tie-crane, and scarifier. The man-lift and chipper traded places with the tamper which was on the North Turntable Lead. A couple of flatcars were "borrowed" from the Weed Team onto which the bundles of ties would be loaded. We'd move the ballast-hoppers, stored on the 150 track, over to the Rail Yards in order to get them out of the way for now. Heather hopped in the scarifier and Mike F. in the tug pulling the hoppers, as Conductor Frank conducted them across the UP Mainline. With the compressor repaired, it could go back to Old Sac. So, Heather handled the switch-out of the compressor and scarifier on the transfer table.

After lunch, Mike F. on Big-Green moved the hoppers onto the ground under I-5. Then he loaded the ties bundles onto flat cars. Frank piloted the Kalamazoo pulling the ties and compressor back to Old Sac. The MOW Team work-train was pulled out the container to be rearranged for quick deployment next week. Harry and Frank started and tested the spike-puller machine which hadn't been run in a while. That took a little effort to say the least. Meanwhile, the El Dorado was being moved into the Museum for an evening event. The MOW Team and Train Crew successfully implemented the provisions of Part 214.325 "train coordination" as their protection. Over at the Shops, Alan, Chris, Mike F., and Heather sought out sufficient sets of 110-pound joint bars, plates, and joint-plates. That's tiring work for sure. They fueled the back-hoe then Mike F. on Big Green returned the drums to their storage area. Phew, what day. Lots and lots got done and we are ready to roll next Saturday as the Team, along with its Signal Department colleagues, commences the Great Rail-upscaling Project of 2016!

Speaking of next week, it appears that the weather will play havoc with the Weed Team's planned activities. So, for now, the Weedies are "on-call." Tuesday and Thursday evening, the Team will continue its great work beginning at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. There will be extra doughnuts on hand Saturday for the big project. It will be a joint effort between the MOW Team and Team Signals as the area where we're working is in the south approach to the Front Street Grade Crossing Warning System. If nothing else, it should prove an interesting project. Many thanks to the great folks of the MOW Team who really brightened up the Erecting Shop this week!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



At Hood, Mike T. deploys the extra-long pole-saw to teach that tree a lesson...



Eureka! Heather is happy! She found the problem with the field and brush mower





Fred installs a new fuel pump on the rail-mounted air-compressor



As Mr. Keats once said, "A thing of beauty is a joy for-ever". Mike T. agrees and admires the dismantled 65-gallon rig





Cliff finishes up work on the spray-rig's engine and pump mount



Heather installs a new clutch on the field-and-brush mower





In order to re-plumb the 65-gallon spray-rig, Mike H. and Fred heat the hose to make it fit on the fitting



Mike T. begins the re-plumbing





Eureka! Frank finds the appropriate set of “comp-joints”



Frank grabs a bundle of ties





Mike F. loads two 55-gallon drums of red-diesel onto the MOW Team's trusty Chevy Truck



Chris fuels the tamper





Mike F. and Heather switch-out the flatcars



Heather moves the man-lift and chipper off the old 150 Track for placement on the North Turntable Lead





Alan moves the tie-crane off the old 150 Track



Green means GO! Heather pilots the scarifier and Mike F. the Kalamazoo as Conductor Frank manages the operation





Heather at the controls of the transfer-table handles switching-out the compressor for the scarifier



Mike F. on Big-Green loads ties onto flatcars





Harry practices his best Rose Parade wave as he and Frank pull the compressor and tie-laden flat cars over to Old Sac.



Harry and Frank work on getting the spike-puller to start





Success! Harry pulls repeatedly on the starter cord and finally gets it started

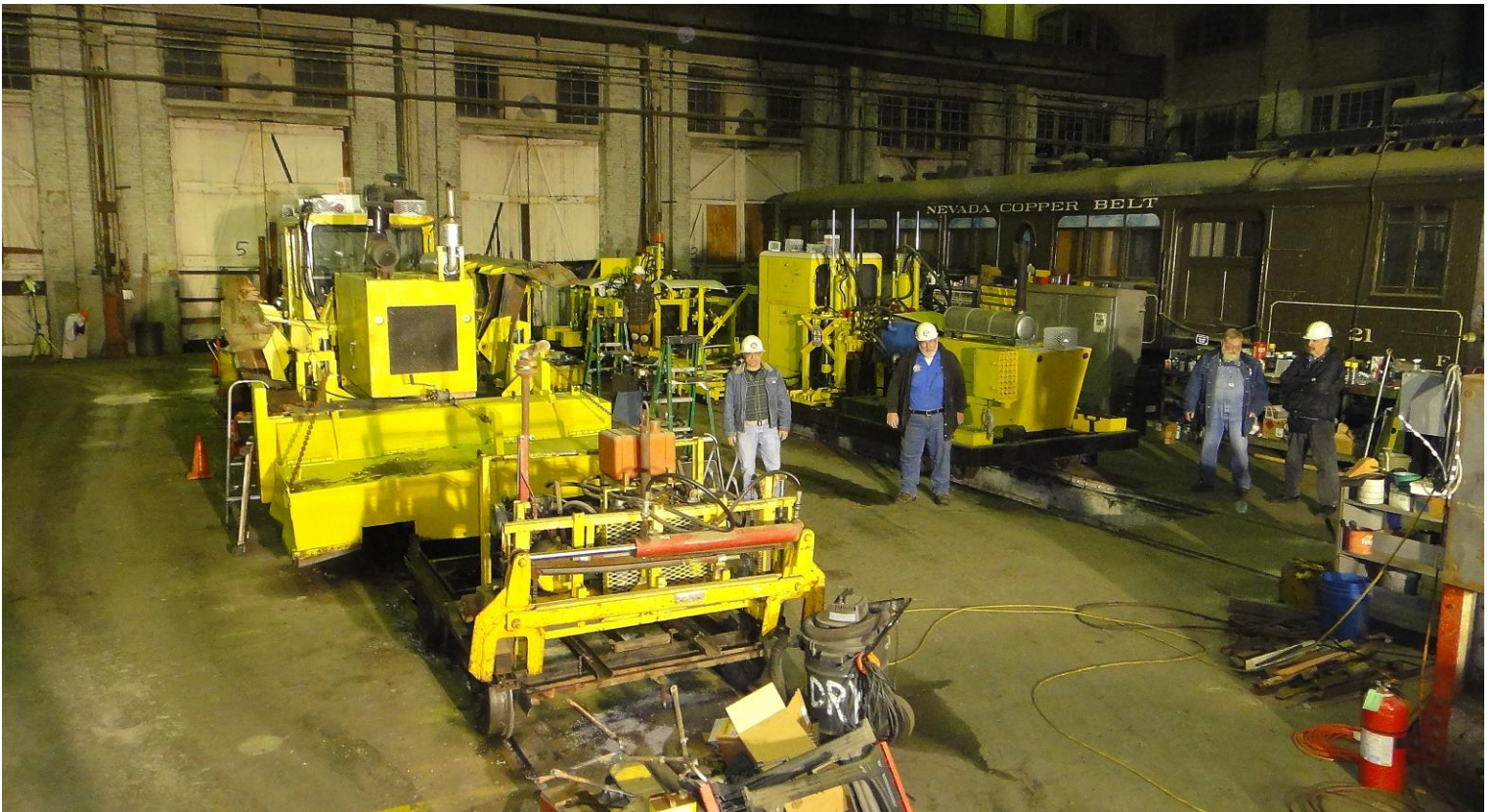


Mike F. watches as the El Dorado passes by through our work area





Mike F. now removes the 55-gallon drums under Chris's direction



Bonus picture of the week: we don't usually stage photos but, the scene was too perfect and the light was just right for some experimentation with the camera. Standing very still are Mike T., Mike H., Frank, Pat, and Fred in the MOW area of the Erecting Shop