

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 25, 2015. It's amazing what a group of volunteers can accomplish in just one week. Lots and lots and lots. So, let's start listing all those lots and get this update started!

On Monday, the first half of a 200 ton order of ballast rock was delivered down at Setzer. This will allow us to re-ballast about a quarter-mile of track. Thanks to Alan Hardy and his perseverance, a track raise between Mile Post 1 and Broadway will begin very soon.

On Tuesday, the Vegetation Vigilantes headed south to the Hood Line to begin their annual regime of chemical warfare against blackberry vines. Mike Taylor, Dave Megeath, and Joe Galipeau donned Tyvek suits, goggles, and gloves as they deployed the Weed Team's spray rig. They managed to spray 0.7 mile of track leaving 3.8 miles to go. The thorny petulance shredded Dave's Tyvek suit. Blackberry vines are insidious along the Hood Line and have to be controlled or else they would take over the entire right-of-way. Mike T. and the Weedies undergo a strict training regimen and government certification to do this kind of work – as we will all learn about at Part 214 training on February 18th and 28th. Without work of the Weed Team, the railroad would be Brer Rabbit in the briar patch!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Frederick Carr, Cliff Hayes, Gene Peck, Alan, Mike Harris, Heather Kearns, Scott Morrison, Frank Werry, and Harry Voss gathered for great things. In Bay 4 of the Erecting Shop, Fred, Scott, Alan, Gene, and Pat got right to work on the Team's top priority machine: the tie-shear. Under Scott's leadership, we see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel on the restoration of this machine. Over in Bay 5, "Team Tug", was putting the finishing touches on Kalamazoo. A year ago, this derelict Kalamazoo ballast regulator was hauled into the Shops with the idea of converting it into a tug. Although almost everyone on the Team worked on the conversion at one point or another, it was Mike H. and Frank, in particular, who made the idea into a reality. Their incredible efforts would be on display on Saturday with the grand debut of the tug out on the line – in time to haul hoppers full of rock.

Thursday, Alan, Fred, Cliff, Mike H., Mike T., and Frank continued the good works. Mike T. performed maintenance of Weed Team equipment. Cliff made anti-vandalism cages around the lights mounted on the Kalamazoo's roof. Fred, Frank, and Mike H. finished work on the Kalamazoo and filled its diesel tank. Also, some old ties were loaded in the MOW Truck to use in rebuilding a small retaining wall.

Friday, Frank and Alan led a crew that staged all the MOW equipment for our activities on Saturday. The ballast hoppers were unburied from behind several other pieces of equipment up on the old 150 Track and hooked to the old-old tamper. The motorcar consist was rearranged in the container. Now we would be all set for a quick departure on Saturday morning on our great ballasting adventure.

Chris Carlson, Steve Nemeth, Kevin Hecteman, Heather, Pam Tatro, Fred, Michael Florentine, Mike H., Frank, Ed Moriarty, Harry, Clem Meier, Alan, and Matt Blackburn, arrived early on Saturday for celebratory doughnuts. For the first time in years, the Team would begin spreading ballast rock in preparation for a track raise. After a few fits and starts, the Team headed out on the line. Mike H. piloted the Kalamazoo, Kevin the A-6 motorcar, Steve the Tamper, Mike F. the Green Machine, and Harry the back-hoe. The Team split into two groups. Kevin, Clem, Heather, Fred, Frank, Ed, and Chris stopped at MP 1.1 to begin rebuilding a retaining wall along the bike path. Several of the heavy hard-wood relay ties from that came from the old Amtrak depot were used for this project. Rebar held the old, rotting wall together which led to some consternation. Clem came up with the clever idea of using a pipe as a lever and quickly straightened the bent rods. Ed, Chris, Kevin, and Fred pulled the monster ties off the truck and got them into position. Meanwhile, Steve, Heather, Pam, Mike F., Mike H, Alan, and Harry were down at Setzer getting the ballast hoppers filled. Mike F. and Harry demonstrated their incredible skills operating the Big Green Machine and back-hoe in concert to load the hoppers. Because we weren't sure if the tug could pull 15 tons of rock up the Setzer Grade, Steve brought the tamper down as back-up power. We were please to see how easily the Kalamazoo pulled all four loaded hoppers up the hill with no problem. Up at Mile Post 1, Mike H. piloted the tug very slowly as Alan and Mike F. dumped enough rock onto the track to do a two-inch raise. The newest hopper, built in our Shops by our master metal artist, Cliff Hayes, worked perfectly. This was a very successful operation. In the afternoon, Matt manned the MOW Team's recruitment display at the Museum's Open House for prospective docents. The rest of the team continued the ballasting efforts. The best part of the day was the successful deployment of the tug. Although a few issues were discovered that will have to be addressed, it worked beyond our expectations. It was a good shake-down cruise for the tug and a better day for your MOW Team.

The MOW Team wishes to express its thanks to Al DiPaolo and his crew in the Mechanical and Restoration Shop for making it possible for us to get the Kalamazoo tug out of the building. The transfer table has experienced some difficulties of late and they went out of their way to make it possible for us to use the table on Saturday morning. Many thanks to Al and his very talented crew!

This coming week, the Weed Team will continue its campaign against blackberry vines at Hood. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday. The Tuesday/Thursday evening crews will meet at the usual time – at or before 5 o'clock in the Shops. Saturday, the sacred pink box will open promptly at 8 o'clock a.m. Accomplishment it the MOW Team's middle name. Many thanks to one and all!

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



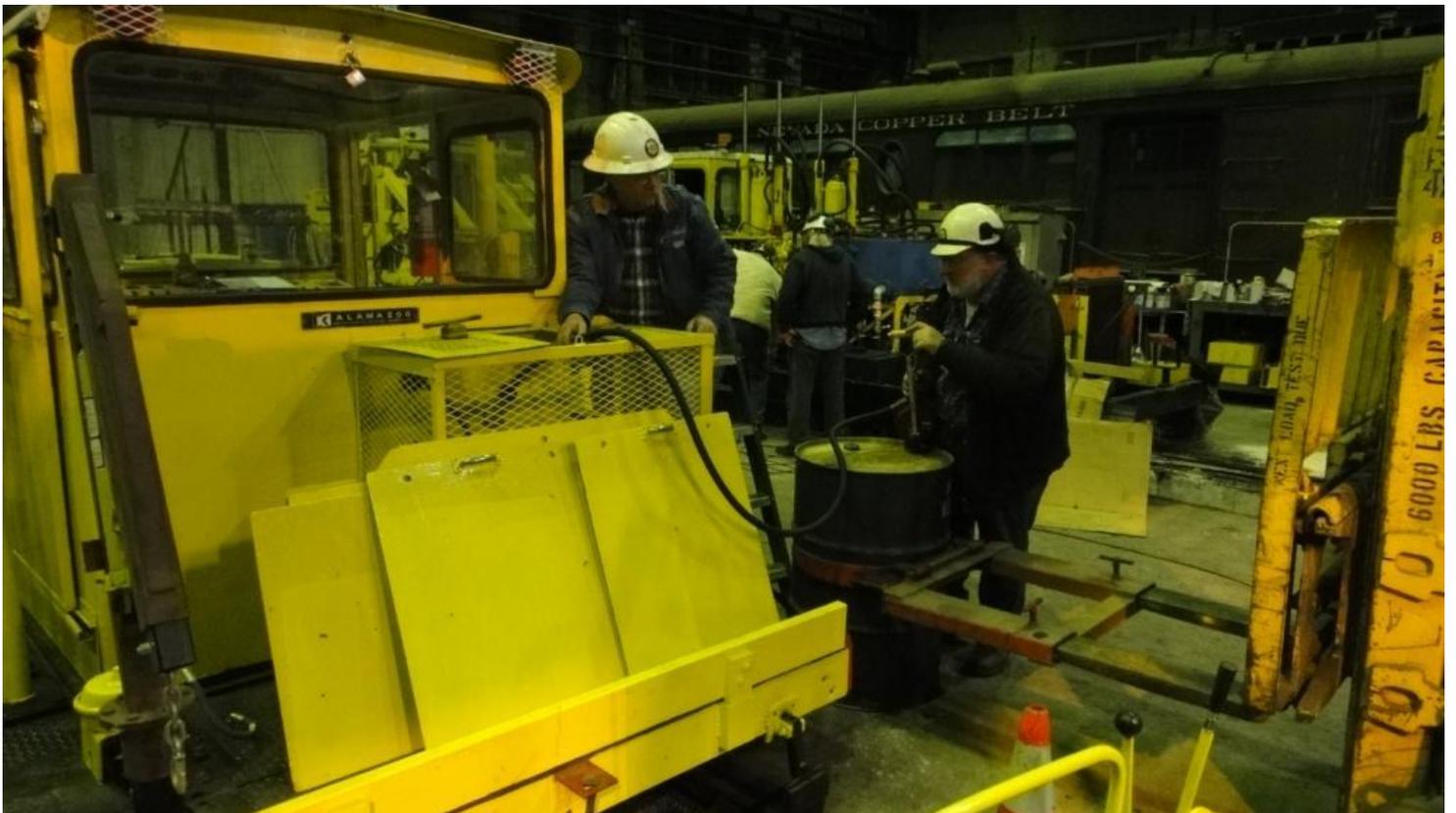
Alan celebrates the arrival of the first 50 tons of ballast rock



Alan and Scott work on rebuilding the tie-shear



Fred installs a new ball-valve fitting on the hydraulic tank of the tie-shear



One final thing to do: Mike H. and Frank fill-'er up with some fresh diesel



Mike H. pilots the Kalamazoo Tug of the Erecting Shop for its maiden shake-down cruise



Clem cleverly uses a pipe as leverage to straighten bent rebar



Clem and Kevin use mattocks to pry-up a piece of the old retaining wall



Ed and Chris maneuver a replacement very heavy hardwood tie into place as part of the retaining wall rebuild



Mike F. opens the clamshells to release rock from the center dump ballast hopper



Mike H. pilots the Kalamazoo pulling the four ballast hoppers very slowly as Alan and Mike F. release the rock. The hopper that Alan is unloading is the new one built in our Shops by master welder and metal artist, Cliff Hayes



Alan and Mike F. ballasting the west side of the rail



Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 214, the MOW Team stands aside in the designated safety zone as the tug heads back to Setzer for a refill of rock



It was a dance of big machines down at Setzer where highly skilled operators Harry on the back-hoe and Mike F. on Big Green fill the hopper cars with rock



Mike F. and Harry put on quite a show



The Kalamazoo tug is ready to pull 15 tons of rock up the Setzer Grade



The Team pauses for a team picture by the Kalamazoo. From left: Kevin, Chris, Mike F., Mike H., Heather, Steve, Frank; seated: Ed and Alan