

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for October 4, 2015. October – this year sure seems to have gone by quickly. That's because your MOW Team has been busy. This week was no exception. So, before we slow down, let's this update underway.

It's tree-trimming season so, of course, your Mighty Weed Team was out and about on Tuesday chipping tree-parts into dust. Mike Taylor, Frank Werry, Dave Megeath, Frank Squire, and Al Utzig took their cutting implements down the Setzer Lead again this week. Dave was slicing and dicing through the brush and brier faster than a Ginsu Kinfe through a beer-can. In fact, Frank W., Frank S., Al, and Mike T., who were feeding the chipper with Dave's trailings, could barely keep up with him. By the end of the afternoon, he had not only worn out the Team but, also, the chipper, which now needs to go back to the Shops for a blade-sharpening. These guys do tremendous work that, if the Museum had to pay to get done, would cost a fortune. They deserve our recognition and thanks.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, the Mike T. and two Franks stuck around for some MOW fun in the evening. Mike T. worked with Alan Hardy and Mike Harris on repairing the spiking ram on the Nordberg Super "B" spiker. The Team welcomed Frederick Carr back to our ranks after being out for a few weeks due to a shoulder injury. He and Gene Peck worked on restoring the tamper's electrical system which had suffered a bit of a malfunction. Frank S. and Frank W. took the rail-drill out to drill the necessary bolt holes in the additional segment of panel track being added to that which we have already built out in the Rail Yards. You will recall that the Shops have requested we build an additional 50 feet of track onto that project. The two Franks also managed to get the track panels pretty well lined-up so that they could be bolted together. All in all, an excellent evening of outstanding progress.

Thursday evening, Saturday regular, Michael Florentine, showed up at the Shops for some weeknight MOW fun. He joined Frank W., Mike H., Fred, and Alan. While Alan, Mike H., and Fred ran the Super "B" spiker, spiking down those final few ties that were missed last week when the spiking ram went kablooey, Mike F. and Frank W. bolted the final track panel in place. It proved to be a bit tricky to get the joint bars and bolt-holes to line up which required track-jacks and the front-end loader to push, pull, and persuade the track into position. In the end, however, they were successful and now, the entire track – including the extra 50 feet wanted by the Shops – was connected. For Saturday, we'd take care of the finishing touches of inserting a couple ties under a few joints, ballasting, and tamping the rest of the line.

Saturday started bright and cheery with a large pink box of sugary fried-dough goodness. Although, for some strange reason, Pamela Tatro, Clem Meier, Steve Nemeth, Mike Miller, Frank W., Mike H., John Rexroth, and Alan were quite vocal in their demands for bananas, instead. Yes, we had no bananas on site so the Team seemed satisfied with doughnuts. As the Tuesday and Thursday crews managed to get the final extended segment of track bolted up, the plan for the day was to get a couple of ties under panel-track joints, then ballast, raise, line, level, and tamp the track. It sounded like a good plan but, like everything else with this project, challenges erupted. Steve climbed into the front-end loader and Frank W. hopped on the back-hoe. They'd load rock into the ballast cars. Mike H. piloted the Kalamazoo pulling the hoppers which Alan operated. Clem, Mike M., Pam and John gathered track jacks and set about getting the two or three ties under joints we needed in place. Unfortunately, we had run out of the correct size tie-plates. So, the Team improvised and cannibalized plates from the remaining segments of panel-track. With ties placed and plated, Steve invoked his world famous "as seen on TV" windmill spike-driving technique.

Then the problems began. The contractor, who ripped-up the track, was supposed to have separated out the ballast rock from other debris. This did not happen. What looked like a nice pile of rock ended up being a heap of rubble littered with football sized chunks of concrete, bricks, plant debris, and dirt. Unfortunately, we didn't discover this until it was too late. Great clouds of dust and clogged-up clam-shell doors on the hoppers were the result. Mike M. on Big Green tried shaking the hoppers with the forks to break-up the clogs. Then Frank W. brought in the back-hoe and tried to reach inside with the hoe but could not achieve the right angle. Steve climbed up inside the hoppers and eventually managed to unclog them using a lining-bar and mattocks. This ended our use of the hoppers for ballasting. Instead, the loader and back-hoe placed rock along the track. The crew then manually picked out the debris and garbage. Steve in the loader and Frank W. in the back-hoe got quite the "E-ticket" rides by hurling down into a deep pit and back up the steep embankment along the rails in order to place rock in areas not accessible by road- vehicles (hence, why we were using the hoppers in the first place). By late afternoon, enough usable rock had been laid to begin the process of jacking, lining, and leveling the track. However, the problems with the hoppers put the Team well behind schedule. Nonetheless, the Team persevered and, by the end of the day, managed to line and surface about a third of the track's length. This project has proved to be more challenging than anticipated and we are all looking forward to it being done.

This coming week, the Weed Team will be heading to Hood on Tuesday for a day of doing what Weedies do. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. The afternoon and evening crew on Tuesday will be meeting a bit early – around 1 o'clock – in an attempt to complete the track-build project this week. If you're available to help out on Tuesday afternoon, come on out and join the fun. Thursday, 5 o'clock is the call time for now. Saturday, bananas and doughnuts will be available at 8 o'clock a.m. The Team will be working out on the line this Saturday. The MOW Team sends a special "shout-out" to our own Quartermaster in Chief, Heather Kearns, on her promotion to conductor on the Railroad. Well done, Heather! As always, a big shout-out to the MOW Team members who, despite adversity, always come through. This has been an demanding project but, it too shall pass and we'll soon be back out on the line where we belong. Many thanks, indeed!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



The moment of truth: an offending limb drops after being sliced and diced by Dave's "Ginsu saw" ...



Mike T., Frank S., and Al take a moment to reconnoiter what Dave has accomplished – and what they have to chip...



Mike H. hooks the straps up to the spiking ram to be lifted by Alan and the forklift



Frank S. and Frank W. get the rail-drill set



With the Super "B" repaired, Alan, and Mike H. (on the other side) operate the spiker-rams while Fred feeds spikes into the chutes



Mike F. and Frank W. line up the bolt-holes with the joint-bars



If it doesn't quite fit, force it! Mike F. give the joint-bar a little "whack"...



Under the direction of Mike F. on the ground, Frank W., in the front-end loader gives the track a little shove



The Team arrives on site



Clem stands ready with tie-tongs to move the tie as Steve and Mike M. dig to make some room for it under a joint



Steve and Mike M. use the claw-bar and “road-master” to pull a wayward spike



Somethin' ain't right here. The first sign of trouble as a load of rock – er, dirt – is dropped from the ballast hoppers



Robbing Peter to pay Paul – Mike M., Frank W., and Pam “steal” tie plates from the remaining segments of panel track



Mike M. “nips” the tie. Steve sets the spike ready to hand the hammer to John so he can do the same on the other side



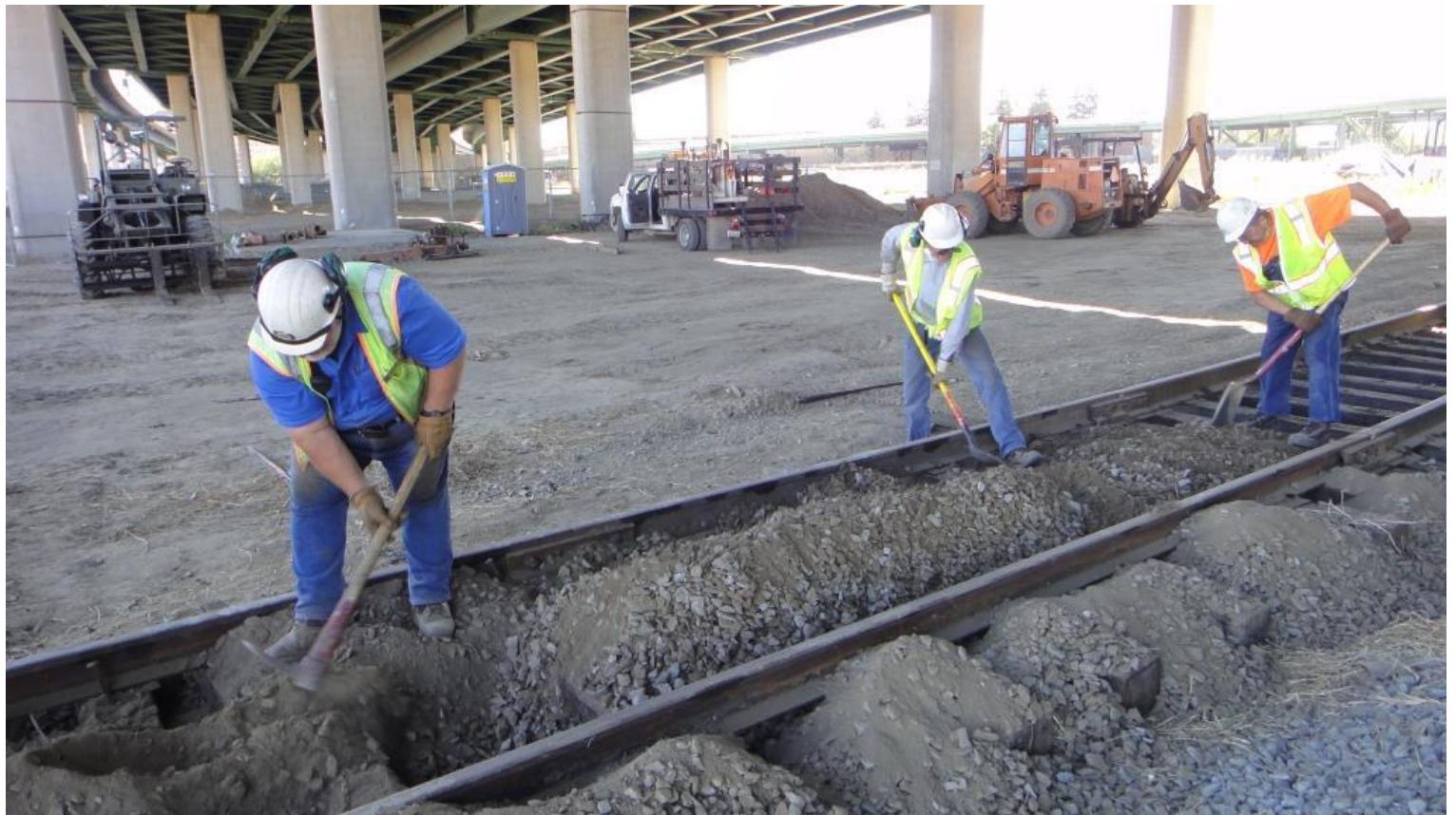
Steve demonstrates his world-famous "as seen on TV" patented windmill spike-driving technique



Steve in the front-end loader and Frank W. on the back-hoe load more rock and debris into the ballast cars



Mike M. on Big Green tries to use the all-terrain fork-lift to shake the junk loose inside the hopper



Frank W., Steve, and John are human ballast regulators



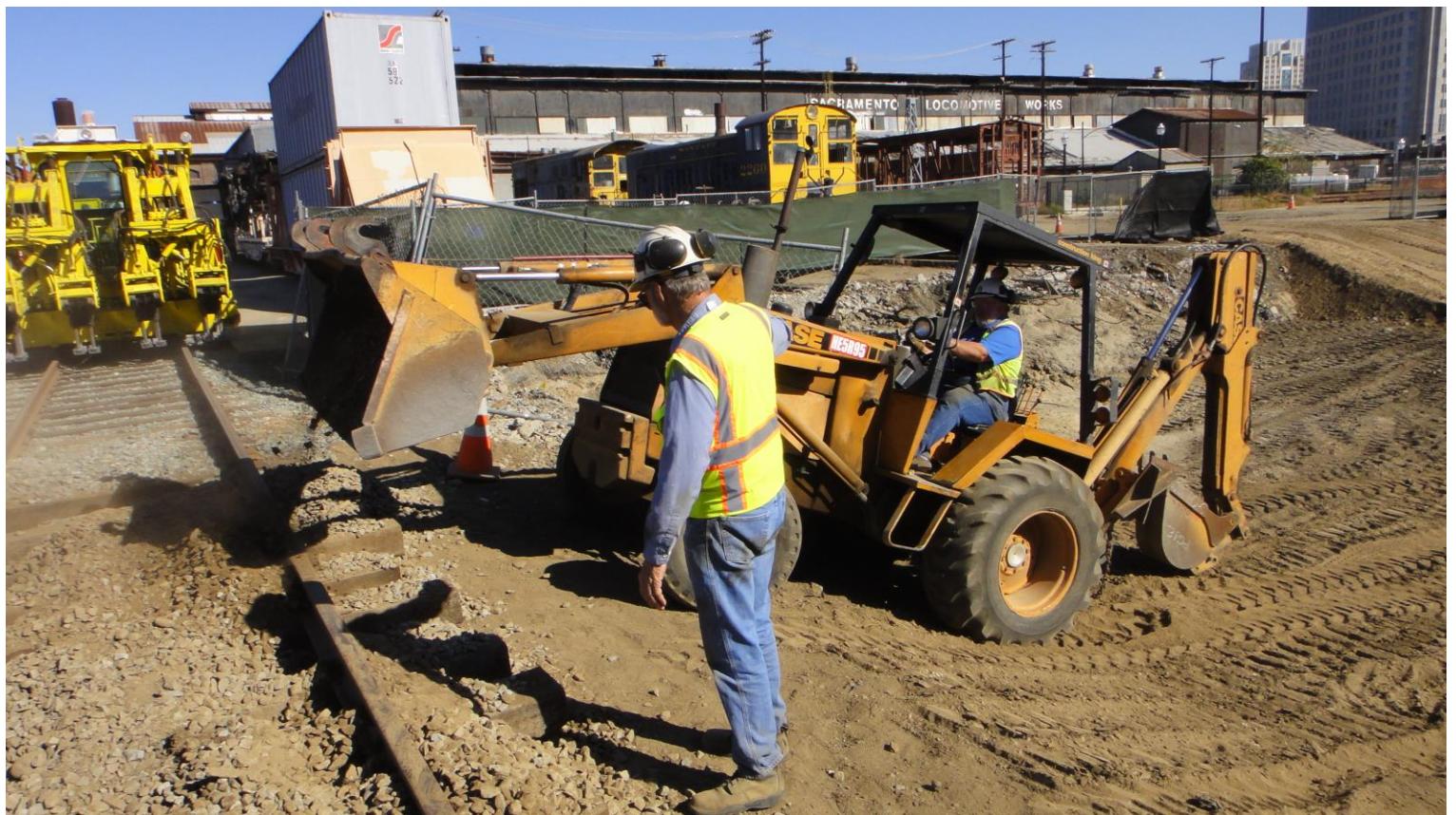
Bring in the tamper



Mike H. jacks a segment of track as Alan eyeballs the level



With hopper cars abandoned, Steve in the loader takes an e-ticket ride down into a pit and back up again to ballast the track



And, now it's Frank W.'s turn