

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 1, 2015. Three and a half weeks 'till Polar Express and your MOW Team making the track smooth serving hot chocolate. So, let's chill-out and get this update started.

Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Mike Harris, Alan Hardy, Jose Gomez, Harry Voss, and Frederick Carr spent their Tuesday doing good works for the MOW Team. Alan removed a faulty check-valve and leaky hydraulic cylinder from the Super-B spiker. Fred and Jose worked in the Boiler Shop on the Big Green Machine. They tracked down the pesky fuel leak then began the process of replacing the battery terminal connectors for both batteries which had become severely corroded. Mike H. descended down into the pit under the BEB-17 ballast regulator in an attempt to diagnose the problem with latching system that holds the turntable up. He has figured out the problem and has diagramed it so that work can begin on making it function properly. Cliff and Pat got the tamper working at 100 percent capacity again. Last week, several bolts holding the taming tines in place sheared-off. But, all is right now with the tamper. Indeed, it was a good evening of MOW fun.

Thursday, Mike Taylor was the lone representative of the Weed Team working at Hood. He observed that the track is still in place all the way from Hood to the fourth trestle. The poison-oak eradication program undertaken by the Weedies earlier this year looks to have been effective for now. Mike T. reports that there are gobs of trees to prune. So, he fired-up the gas-chainsaw-on-a-stick and began chopping away. He declared that that the gas-chainsaw-on-a-stick is the best investment ever made by the Weed Team. Kudos to Mike T. for his solitary dedicated efforts out on the Hood Line!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Harry, Alan, Frank Werry, Fred, Jose, and Mike H. got right to work on important projects. Alan got the new check-valve installed on the Super-B spiker. Fred got the battery cables put back together on the Big Green Machine, made sure that the terminals were clean, and coated them in an anti-corrosive agent. Frank and Jose headed to Old Sacramento to take the Kalamazoo tug and ballast hoppers down to Setzer where Mike H. in the front-loader filled them so that they would be ready for deployment first thing Saturday morning. This, of course, was a successful operation despite the fact that the tilt of the earth on its axis and relative position to the sun meant darkness descended on the Team while headed back to town. The evening ended back at the Shops with most everything staged for heading out on the line Saturday morning.

Speaking of Saturday morning, there were plenty of doughnuts on hand for Alan, Clem Meier, Harry Voss, Frank, Jose, and Michael Florentine. More raising and leveling of the west rail south of Mile Post 2.7 was in store for the Team. Mike F. took out the loader with the track-jacks in the bucket while conductor Frank conducted Alan in the tamper across the UP Mainline. Harry loaded up our trusty Chevy Truck and the Team headed south. First task was to get the hoppers on the north side of the Kalamazoo tug so that the tug would be pulling rather than shoving them down the line. Darkness had prevented the run-around on Thursday night. Next, Mike F. and Clem took the loader down to Baths where a stray stick of rail had fallen off the flatcar stowed on the Auxiliary Track. Using the rail-tongs chained to the bucket, Mike F. lifted the wayward stick with the loader back up onto the flat car with Clem's guidance. Back at 2.7, Clem, Frank, Jose, Mike F., and Harry dug-out rock from under the base of the rail in order to place jacks. Jose and Harry cranked on the jacks while Mike F. checked the level. Clem cleared rock off the tops of the ties so that Alan in the tamper could see the ties as he tamped them up. Again, we were raising the west rail upwards of 2½ inches in some areas to level it with the east. Then the "hop-scotching" began as the track was leveled, the jacks would be pulled, placed in the loader's bucket, and taken south to re-set. Finally, Jose, Frank, and Clem spread rock out of the hoppers further down the line along the west rail for the track-jacking to continue. This process continued right up until train-time when the Team and equipment had to skedaddle south onto the I-5 bridge to be out of the way the Spook-o-motive's journey to Baths. As it is not possible to jack the track under traffic, the Team packed up and headed to lunch. Work in Old Sacramento beckoned for the afternoon.

Our trusty track inspectors had identified a center-cracked joint-bar on the middle track (Track 2) leading into the Central Pacific Passenger Station (CPPS). The rails leading into the CPPS are small in stature. It's all 60-pound rail which means that each three-foot segment weighs just 60 pounds. It's the smallest rail on the SSRR. Our supply of track materials for this size of rail is rather limited. Nonetheless, Alan managed to find some replacement joint-bars that appeared to fit. So, he and Mike F. began digging out the joint, removing the spikes, and taking the nuts off the bolts. The challenge came when we determined that the new joint-bar was shorter in length than the joint-bar on the other side of the rail. Ergo, the bolt-holes didn't quite match up. But, with a little effort and the use of a drift-pin, everything eventually came together. It just took more time than initially anticipated. In the meantime, the Kalamazoo needed to be run-around the ballast hoppers again before they could be put away. Because the Center Siding was occupied, Frank got the A-6 motorcar out of the container to do a "ping-pong" move in order to switch everything around. Then, he conducted Alan in the tamper back over the UP Main for its journey to the Shops. The Team was quite pleased with its work out on the line. In fact, the Conductor of Sunday's train confirmed that the leveling work is proving successful. He reported that it has reduced the bounciness of the train between MP 2.5 and MP 2.75.

This coming week, the Weed Team will gather for more organic fun. If the sharpened blades for the chipper are available, they will install them. If not, the Weedies will go to Hood to continue pruning trees. Meet at the Shop at 8:00 a.m. and bring a large lunch. The Tuesday and Thursday Teams will continue the fun in the afternoons and evenings starting at or before 5 o'clock. Saturday, we'll have the whole day of unfettered access to the Mainline as no trains will be running. You won't want to miss the fun. Doughnuts will be served at 8:00 a.m. It's a fantastic team of folks who work together to build a better railroad. Many, many thanks, indeed, to them and to all our supporters!

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Jose and Fred take the batter cables apart on the Green Machine



Fred uses the whacking-tool to make a few minor adjustments...



Mike H. in the front-end loader loads rock into the side-dump hoppers



Conductor Frank secures safe passage for Alan in the tamper across the UP Mainline at RV 988



Jose and Frank dig-out spaces under the west rail in which track-jacks can be placed



Harry and Mike F. with lining-bars in hand stand ready and willing to start jacking the west rail



Clem scoops rock off of the ties so that Alan in the tamper can see them when tamping



Jose jacks the track as Mike F. checks the level



Clem and Jose pull the jack as Alan in the tamper tamps the west rail to level



Frank grabs a jack from the bucket of the loader...



...Which he then sets as the jacking process hops-scotches down the line...



Alan in the tamper tamps-up the west rail



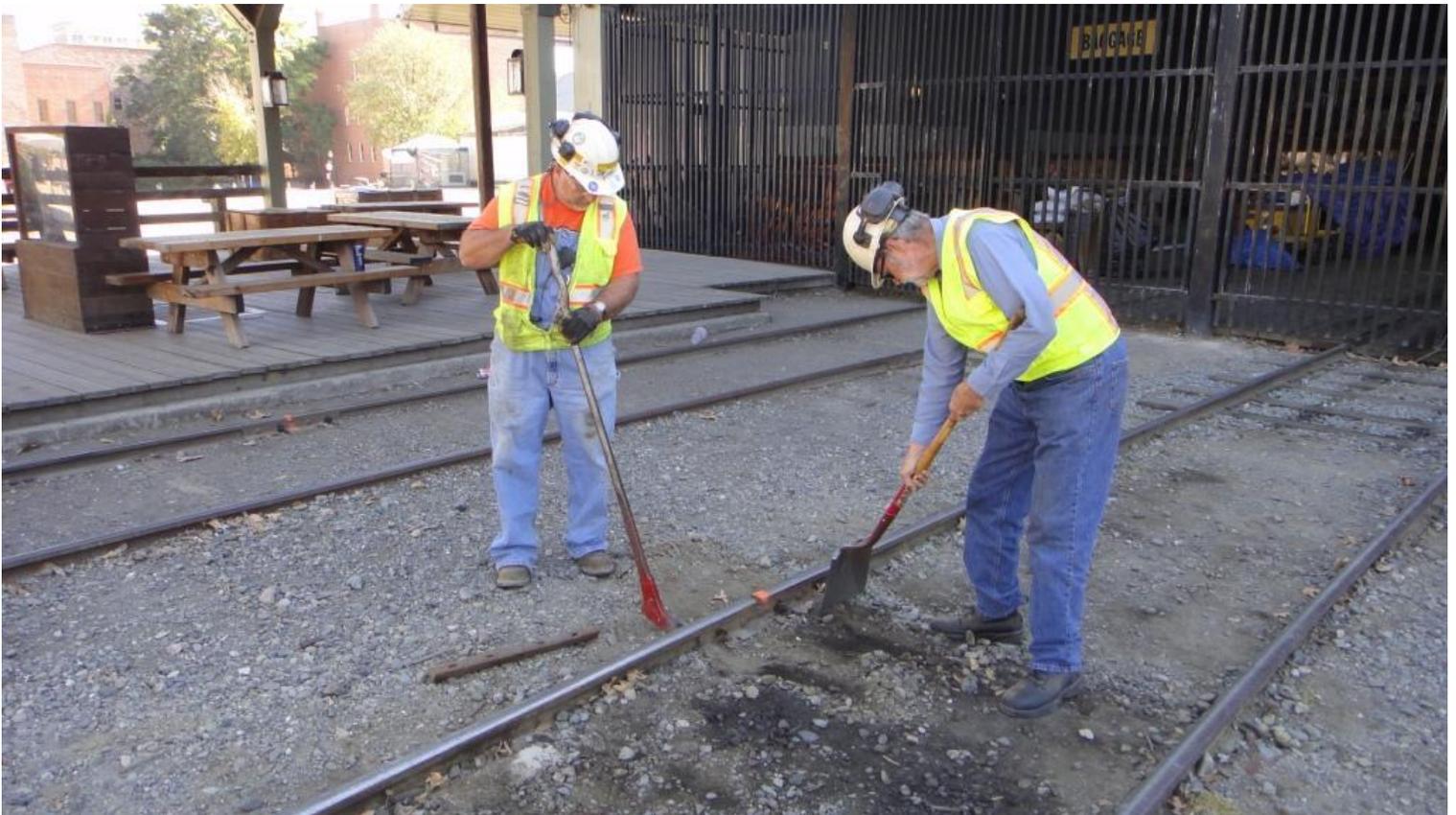
Frank nips-up a tie as Clem and Jose use lining bars to jam rock under it



Frank, Clem, and Jose ballasting the track



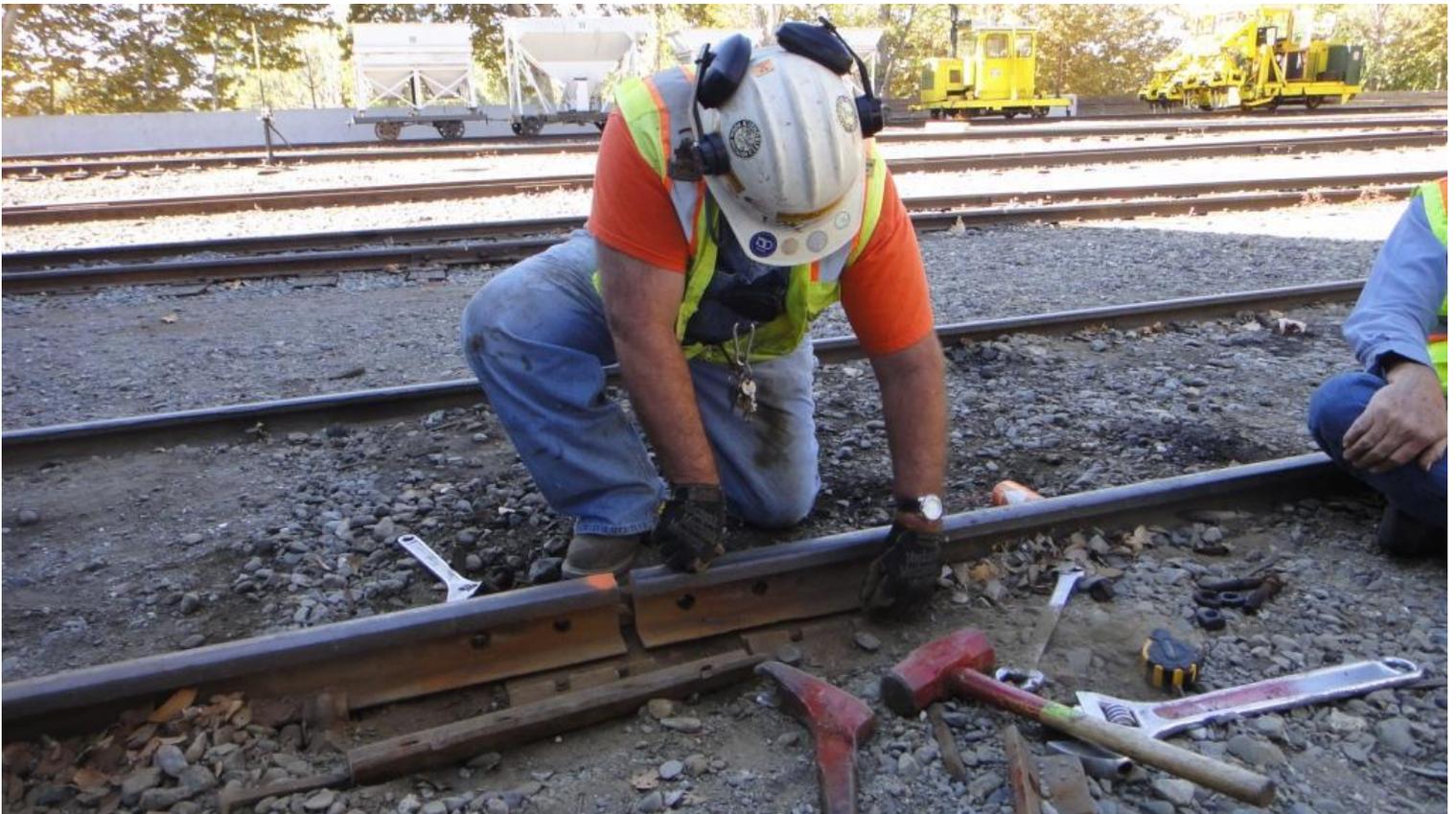
The Spook-o-motive arrives at Baths



In the afternoon, Mike F. and Alan work on replacing a cracked joint-bar on Track 2



Mike F. removes bolts



With the cracked joint-bar removed, Mike F. preps the joint for the replacement