

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 15, 2015. T-minus 12 days and counting until Polar Express 2015 sets off from Old Sacramento to the North Pole. So, we better get this update started before the tracks freeze.

Tuesday, Alan Hardy, Pat Scholzen, Heather Kearns, Frederick Carr, Gene Peck, Frank Werry, and Mike Harris took on several very important projects in the Erecting Shop. A couple weeks ago, Alan and Mike H. had removed a rather leaky hydraulic cylinder from the Nordberg Super B spiker which was sent out for repair. Now fixed, Mike H. and Alan reinstalled the cylinder on Tuesday evening. Fred, Gene and Pat began the process of replacing the clutch in the A-4 motorcar. Heather and Frank headed to the west side of the Boiler Shop to arrange several 55-gallon drums which were scheduled to be refilled with red-diesel Thursday morning. Because of recent rains, it was a muddy pit out there. So Frank fired-up the back-hoe and filled the deep mud puddles outside the fuel-shed with some small rock so that the tanker truck wouldn't get stuck. All in all, a good evening of significant progress on several fronts.

Once again this week, Mike Taylor was the "I" in Team. He was the lone member of the Weed Team to head out on the line. He started off chopping away at branches on the Setzer Lead with the chainsaw-on-a-stick. Then, he headed to Hood for some solitary time near the south end of the Sacramento Southern Railroad striking back at trees and bushes daring to foul the track. Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Heather arrived extra early – like 6 o'clock a.m. early – to meet the fuel tanker truck (which didn't get stuck). She returned in the evening to join Mike H., Fred, Alan, and Frank. Fred got down-and-dirty climbing under the A-4 motorcar to begin disconnecting the transmission from the engine. Frank, Mike H., and Alan threw open the big doors of Bay 4 and brought in the transfer table onto which they ran Super B spiker back-and-forth testing its drive motor. Mike H. had identified the problem with its lack of "umph" and wanted to give it a test-drive. During the testing, another problem was found with one of the spike guns which he, Frank, and Fred took apart and fixed on the spot. Heather gathered one of the newly filled 55-gallon drums of red-diesel and pumped the whole thing into BEB-17 ballast regulator. We learned that it has quite a big tank. The plan was take it out on the line come Saturday so, it needed to be ready to roll. Indeed, a good evening.

Chris Carlson was the purveyor of doughnuts for the Team on Saturday. He brought plenty for Alan, Clem Meier, Michael Florentine, Heather, Frank, Harry Voss, and Jose Gomez. Recently, SSRR freight crews had expressed some concern about several holes in the ballast on the Miller Park Siding. These were the result of the massive tie change-out the Team did in the area this summer. The concern was that, in the event of a night-time freight operations on the Siding, these holes might prove a hazard. So, the Team would address this problem by taking the ballast regulator, tamper, and Kalamazoo tug pulling ballast cars to ballast, plow, surface, and dress the rock on the Siding and Mainline. Well, it proved to be an "interesting" day. We faced several unexpected challenges starting with some sort of community-event marathon run thing that blocked up traffic throughout all of downtown Sacramento. This delayed our ability to get to the worksite. Heather in the MOW Team's trusty truck, Harry in the back-hoe and Mike H. in the front-end loader had to take a circuitous route to get to Miller Park. Meanwhile, down at the Front Street grade crossing, marathon runners ignored the deployed gates and gongs and ran through the crossing anyway thus blocking our machines from passing. Eventually, Alan in the tamper, Chris in the regulator, and Frank in Kalamazoo got through. Down at Setzer, Mike F. and Harry finally got there and started loading the hoppers. Chris began plowing and regulating the ballast on the Siding. Heather brought a "huff-and-puff" machine and completely cleared the north switch at Miller Park (#14) of organic debris. Then things started to get "interesting." As Frank was pulling nearly 12 tons of rock up the Setzer Grade, Mike F., riding on the rear platform, noticed that the draw-bar coupler was breaking off the hopper coupled to the Kalamazoo. The weld had broken. Well, to make a long story short, the situation was assessed and we came up with a plan. Mike F. brought in the loader to act as an anchor to hold the ballast cars in place. Then, we cut-away those cars from the broken ballast car. Clem and Jose set up a secondary fail-safe system to prevent the car from breaking away from the tug should the weld fail completely. Frank slowly and skillfully pulled it up the hill where he was able to run-around it and grab it from the other side which still had its coupler intact. We dumped that rock then, in a somewhat complicated switching move, brought the remaining cars up the hill and attached the bad car to far south end. By this time, the lunch bell was ringing.

After lunch, things progressed relatively smoothly. Chris continued plowing and brooming the siding. Alan tamped the Mainline and straightened catawampus ties. Frank, Jose, Harry, and Mike F. dropped rock on the Mainline then refilled the hoppers and dropped more. Chris finished work on the Siding and proceeded to the Main. This process continued through the afternoon without further incident. By quitting time, the Siding looked great and work on the Main is well in hand. We'll continue this process on the Mainline next Saturday.

The All Aboard Desk announced October recipients of new hour-bars and MOW Team members were amongst them. Congratulations to Joe Gallipeau for achieving 3,500 hours and to Harry Voss for a whoppin' 10,000 hours! Also, the MOW Team sends a "shout-out" and congratulations to our good friends in the Signal Department who celebrated their 20th anniversary this week! The MOW Team works closely with Team Signals and wish them another successful 20, 40, 60, 100 years or more of fun and service to our Railroad!

This coming week, the Tuesday and Thursday crews will gather at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. The sharpened chipper blades are in so the Weed Team will devote Thursday to their installation and, perhaps a test-run. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 AM. Saturday, doughnuts will appear at 8 o'clock a.m. Come on out and join the ballasting fun! Thanks to everyone for your dedication!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Alan works to install the newly repaired hydraulic cylinder on the Super B spiker



Fred working on the clutch under the A-4 motorcar. Hey, where's your hard-hat, Fred?



Oh, there it is!



Mike H. takes the Super B out onto the transfer-table for a test-drive after he figured out the problem with the drive motor



Back inside, Frank, Mike H., and Fred put on a show...



Conductor Frank conducts the tamper and ballast regulator across the UP Main on Saturday morning



On the Miller Park siding, Chris deploys the short-side wing on the ballast regulator



Down in the Setzer Yard, Harry in the back-hoe and Mike F. in the front-end loader fill the ballast cars with rock



Frank pilots the ballast train, filled with 12 tons of rock, up the Setzer Grade. Luckily, Mike F (on the back deck) took a look at the coupler...



Yeah, this could be a bit of an issue. Clem and Mike F. survey the broken weld on the center-dump ballast car's draw-bar coupler



Mike F. brings in the loader to act as an anchor to block the other three full ballast cars from running-away down the hill



Clem disgorging rock from the busted ballast car after the tug ran-around it to hook-up to the coupler on the other side which was still OK



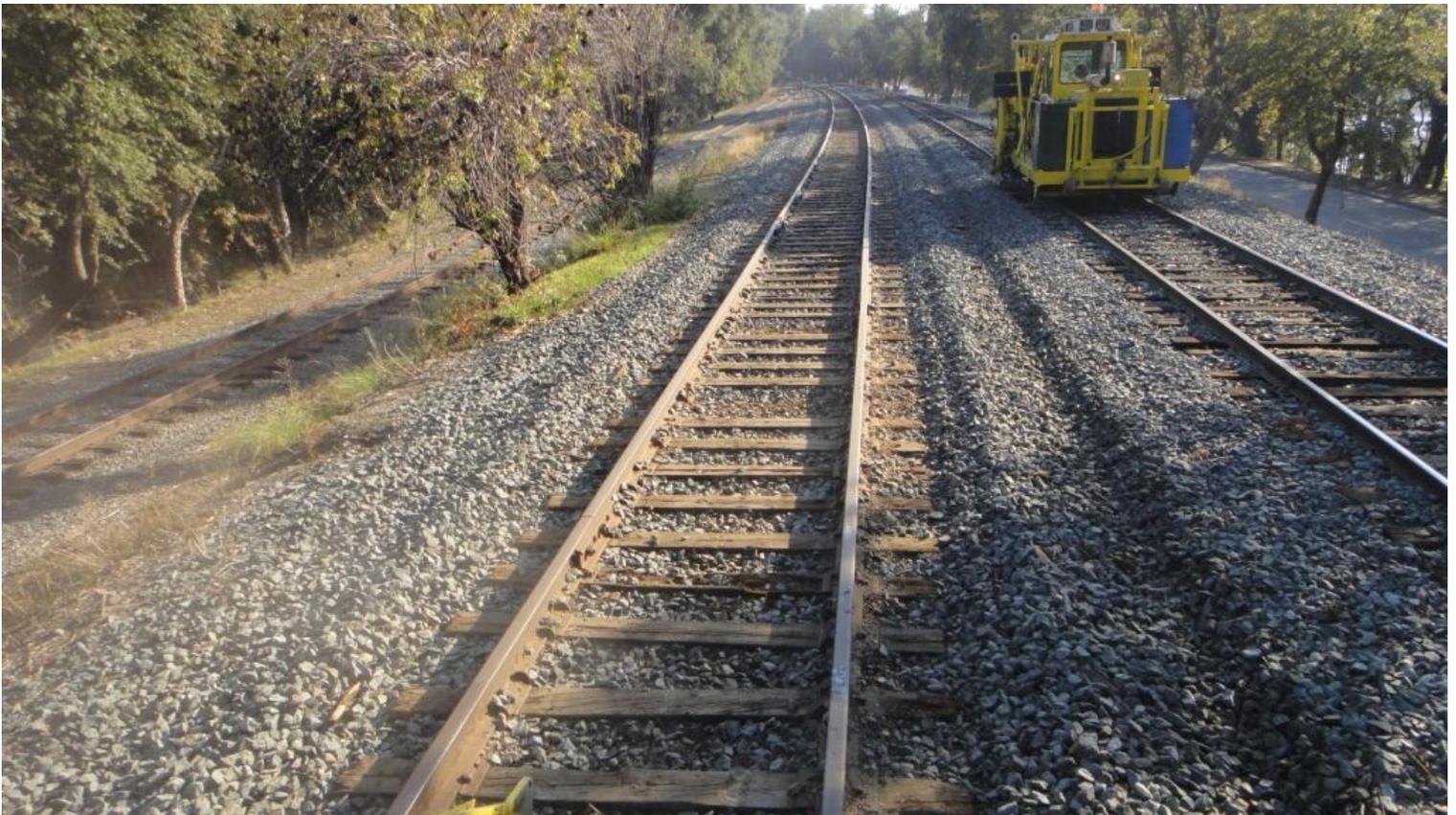
Chris brooms the track with the ballast regulator



Jose drops ballast on the Miller Park Mainline to fill in some of the large gaps in the tie-cribs



Chris makes a final pass plowing the Miller Park Siding



Hey, it looks pretty darned good!