

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 23, 2014. To paraphrase the oft misquoted saying, "Neither rain, nor heat, nor gloom of broken-down machines, stays MOW Team from the swift completion of its appointed tasks." And we got some great tasks done this week. So, swift as the wind, let's get you all updated on this week's accomplishments!

The mighty Weed Team was out and about on Tuesday south of the I-5 Bridge on the Sutterville Line. Mike Taylor, Frank Squire, and Joe Galipeau manned the machines that brought order to chaos and cleared away just about all the intruding tree and bush branches impeding the right of way. What's left to do down there is trimming of the overhead canopy. Everyone volunteering with the Weed Team is making an important contribution to keeping this railroad in operation and maintaining the integrity of State Parks' property on which we operate. They all deserve our appreciation.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, for the first time this year, the cold and damp really seemed to settle in. What better way to warm everyone's spirits than with a barbecue. Luckily, the MOW Team has its very own *Designated Supervisor of Barbecue Engineers* (DSBE), Pat Scholzen, who sparked-up our custom-made barbecue for a delicious evening treat. Joining the party were Cliff Hayes, Frederick Car, Scott Morrison, Harry Voss, Frank Werry, Mike Harris, Gene Peck, Chris Carlson, Heather Kearns, Mike T., Dave, Dusty Galland, and Alan Hardy. Our DSBE is a master at his avocation and everyone felt quite jolly by the end of the evening. It was perfect way to kick-off the holiday season. But, barbecue was not the only thing that occurred on Tuesday. Gene conducted a tune-up and valve adjustment of the tie-shear's Detroit Diesel engine while Scott and Chris worked on its hydraulics. Mike H. began working on the fuel line of Kalamazoo. Fred and Frank W. removed the last of the hydraulic fluid from the Kalamazoo's tank and Alan continued rebuilding the brakes. It was a good evening of camaraderie and accomplishment.

Thursday, Alan, Heather, Frank W., Fred, and Mike H. worked under lights at the Shops. Heather managed to get a near-dead chainsaw working again. Mike H. removed the hydraulic filters on the Kalamazoo for cleaning. Somehow, the latch lever on the Kalamazoo's turntable was pulled. The turntable was slowly descending into the pit. Without power, there was no way to bring it back up into its cradle. Undaunted, Frank W. and Fred figured out a way to retract it using the forklift and wood-blocks. Quite ingenious. Alan is machining a whole new brake-rigging system for the Kalamazoo. Because it is so old, stock parts aren't available any more. Alan's rebuild will be a vast improvement over the previous arrangement. It's really quite a remarkable engineering task.

Drought-ending rain greeted the MOW Team on Saturday morning. But, the arrival of the pink-box brightened the faces of Pam Tatro, Alan, Clem Meier, Heather, Steve Nemeth, Dave, Harry, Frank, Mike T., and Chris. Of course, replacing the ties we removed last week was a priority. But, the Team needed to get the repaired grating over the ground-throw switch at the turntable behind the Museum installed. The Team needed to repair the Interchange switch and add a derail to the 150 Track. Since it was raining, we figured on doing the Old Sac. tasks, first. Steve climbed aboard the Big Green Machine, and took a bundle of ties over to Old Sac. to be loaded on a flatcar. He then lifted the grating out of the truck and, skillfully managed to set it into place perfectly. Frank W. and Mike T. pulled the spikes at the old derail on the 150 track and slid it up to its new position at the very north end. Then the new derail was brought in and installed closer to Switch 101. Pam and Heather cleaned out the flange-ways of the North Turntable Lead which, during Polar Express, will be used by our trusty track inspectors to access the Old Main. Alan and Dave used a track jack to shove a catawampus tie under the Interchange switch (101) where the transit-clip was jamming against into proper position. Pam, Dave, and Heather did maintenance work on the Harp Switch and House Track Switch. A great deal was accomplished, the rain had now ceased and, barring any unforeseen complications, we thought we'd have no trouble getting the ties inserted, plated, spiked, and tamped in the afternoon.

But, as Rosanne Rosannadanna used to say, "It's always something..." Just as we were ready to roll out of town to replace ties, the scarifer/inserter, which had been working swimmingly for months, decided to take a dive on us – and in a position that was blocking the rest of our equipment from moving. To make a long story short, it took about an hour of triage to get it started. Of course, we couldn't take it with us as it was not safe. Alan, Harry, and Chris took it back to the Shops to begin repair work. At this point, we had no choice but to interpret 19th century railroading and insert ties by hand using brute strength and human muscle. We were already an hour behind schedule but, Mike T., Steve, Dave, Heather, and Frank W. were amazing. By hand, they inserted 15 ties, nipped, plated, spiked, and tamped the track all before darkness descended on us. This was really hard work, folks, and the Team deserve great admiration and appreciation. Their "above and beyond" efforts made it possible to annul Train Order 103, the slow order between MPs 1.25 and 1.4. Worn out, the Team got everything put away in Old Sac. and returned to the Shops, where it was lights-out by 6 o'clock.

This coming week is a bit different in scheduling. The Weed Team will be gathering on Monday to finish pruning trees for the North Pole transit later in the week. Meet at the old shop at 8:30 AM. The Tuesday evening crew will meet as usual at or before 5 o'clock. Thursday being Thanksgiving, we're giving you the night off. You're welcome. Saturday, if you're looking for some post Turkey Day fun, we will be open for business at 8 o'clock as usual. Many thanks and Happy Thanksgiving to all our incredible volunteers and supporters!

We'll see

Alan, Chris, and Richard



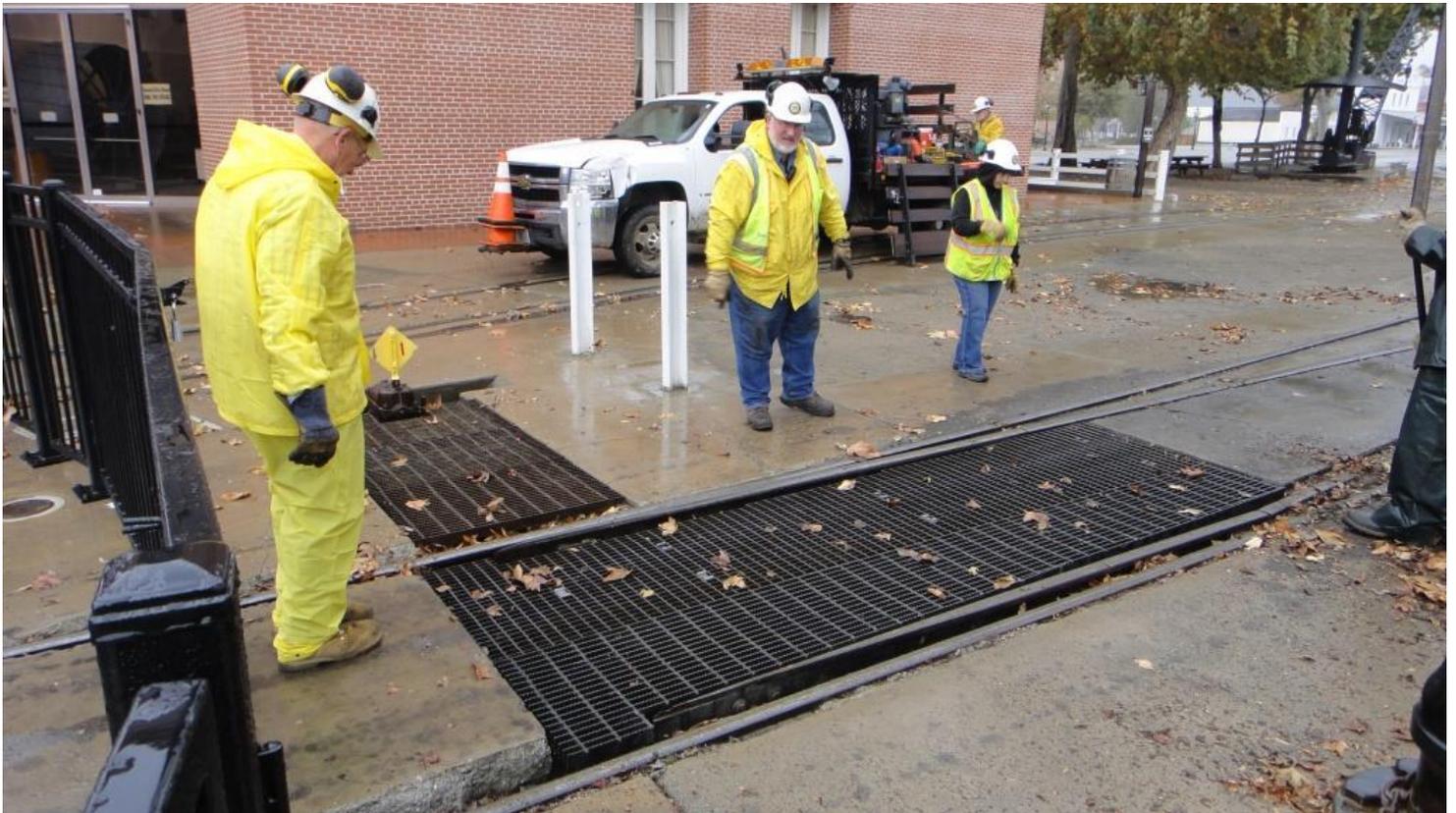
DSBE Pat at work



Hardhats and hamburgers – with some Asian salad, beans, and brownies on the side...



Steve gathering a bundle of ties with the Big Green Machine



Clem, Frank, and Pam admire the new grating in place



Pam and Heather clear out the flange-ways on the North Turntable Lead



Mike T. and Frank slide the old derailed into a new position



Dave and Heather make Switch 2 easier to throw



Alan and Mike T. bring the new derail into place



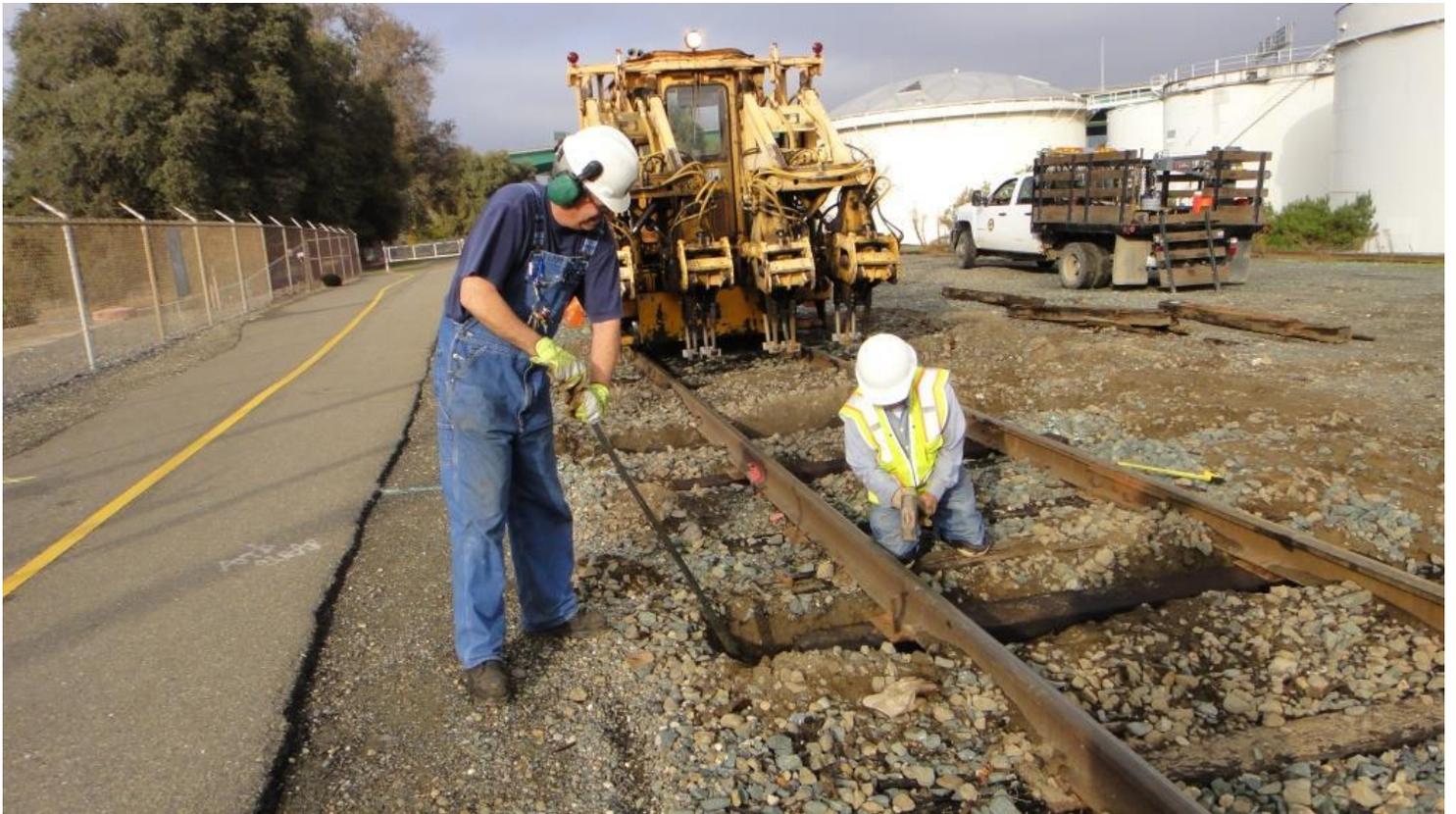
How many Maintenance of Way volunteers does it take to install a derail?



Scarifier triage



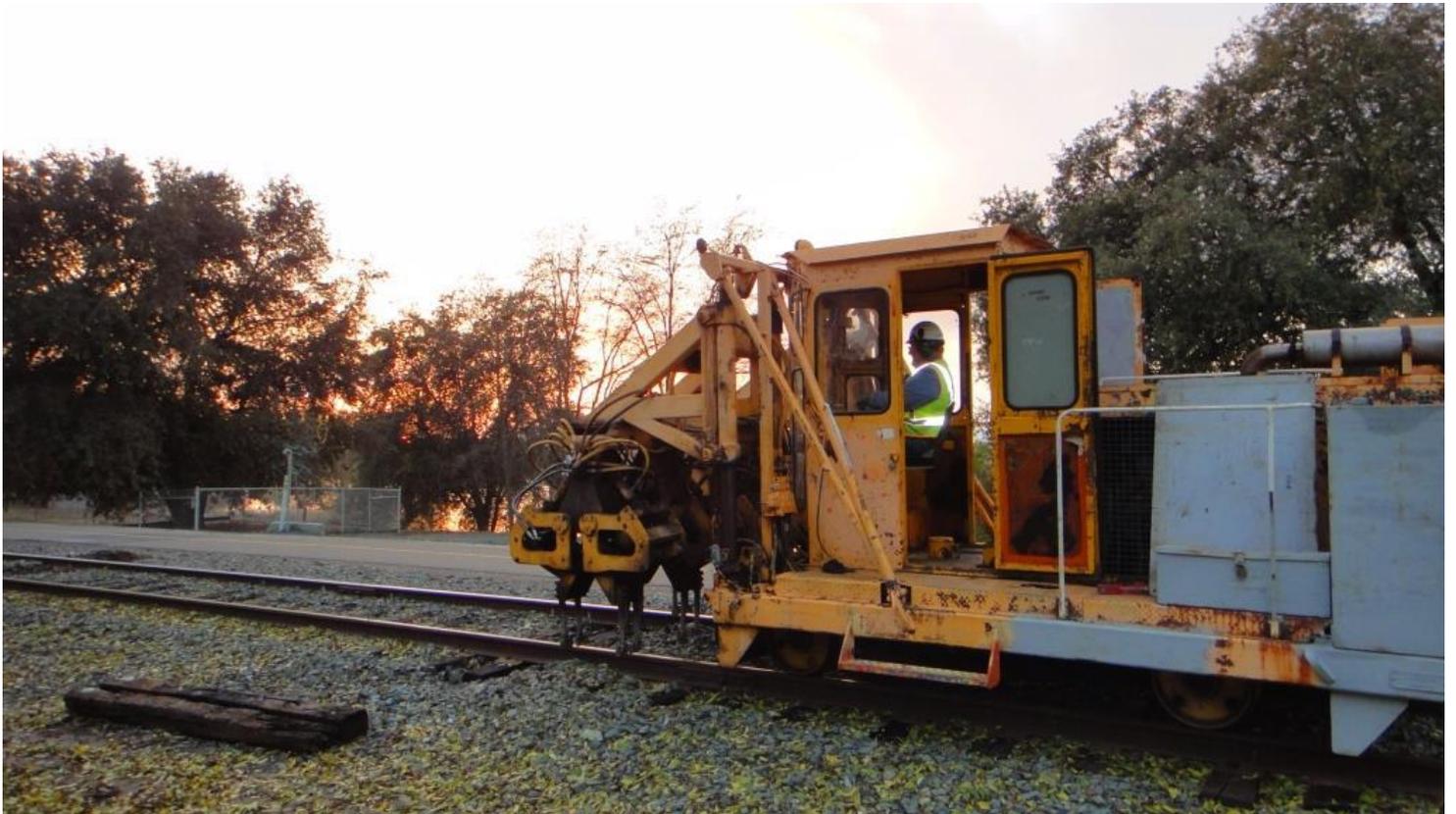
Unloading ties down on the line, Dave salutes the cameraman...



The serious work at hand, Dave nips the tie while Mike T. sets spikes



Steve uses the pneumatic spiker while Heather nips the tie



Tamping the track at sunset...