

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 30, 2014. It was a bit of an abridged week for your MOW Team with Thanksgiving and the start of Polar Express. But, don't worry. There'll be no abridgement of the Update's wordiness. So, let's not delay getting any of those words written or read.

The MOW Team week started on Monday with the final deployment of the mighty Weed Team prior to Polar Express. Designated Supervisor of Defoliation Engineers, Mike Taylor, has awarded extra gold stars to Weedies Frank Werry, Heather Kearns, and Dave Megeath for their untiring work. Thanks to the Weed Team, the North Pole did not encounter any errant limbs during its journey south to Baths. Dave flew through the air in the bucket of the man-lift while Heather, Frank, and Mike gathered the trimmings and chipped them up in the chipper. They also cut and pruned brushes and trees that were reachable from the ground. Keeping our line free of vegetation defects is a major undertaking entailing a great deal of very hard work. The dedication of the Weed Team is greatly appreciated.

Meanwhile, at the Shops on Tuesday, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Heather, Frank, Alan, Matt Blackburn, Mike Harris, and Harry Voss were hanging out for some pre-Thanksgiving MOW fun. The previous Saturday, the scarifer/inserter had suffered a malfunction that led to it being "red-tagged." The starter motor had gone bad. Quartermaster Heather acquired a new starter and, with Gene and Fred assisting, she managed to get it installed. By the end of the evening, the scarifer/inserter was back to full operational status. Alan took the opportunity to make some modifications to the controls in the scarifer's cab by adding a hand-lever directional control. Frank and Matt headed over to Old Sacramento where they moved our equipment that was spotted on the North Turntable Lead up onto the old 150 Track. With Polar Express in full swing, the SP 6051, SP 290, and SP 291 are being spotted on the South Turntable Lead thus blocking access to the turntable. Clearing the North Turntable Lead gives our trusty track inspectors have an alternative way of getting their motorcar out onto the Main Line to conduct the federally mandated twice weekly inspections.

With Thursday being Thanksgiving, an executive decision was made, with great magnanimity, to give the Team the evening off. However, the Shops were open bright and early on Saturday morning where Pam Tatro, Clem Meier, Chris Carlson, and Alan constituted a small but gallant crew. The Team decided not to head out onto the line as it was raining and, also, because it was the first weekend of Polar Express where many MOW Team members were volunteering. Clem and Pam did an outstanding job of sorting spikes, selecting only the ones which will work with the new mechanical spiker that we are hoping to acquire. Meanwhile, amongst other things, Chris installed tank drain valves on the Kalamazoo's air tank and Alan continued working on the Kalamazoo's brakes. Although not a big day by MOW standards, it was a good day nonetheless.

This was the first weekend of Polar Express and the MOW Team was well represented amongst the ranks of volunteers who make the whole thing possible. MOW Team members Frank W., Frank Squire, Ed Moriarty, Dave, Mike Miller, Matt, Michael Sechrist, Taka Blackburn, and Kevin Hecteman were all volunteering with the Polar crews over the three-day weekend. Polar Express is staged by the California State Railroad Museum Foundation which has been a stalwart supporter of your MOW Team. Nearly everything we do is funded by the Foundation. Thus, the successful execution of the annual Polar Express event is critical to MOW's bottom line. As such, the MOW Team would like to send a "shout-out" to the Foundation staff who have put forth so much effort and creativity in making Polar Express such a huge cultural event in the Sacramento region. Foundation staff members Jennifer Rabbon, Sam Mello, Cheryl Meyer, Jennifer Hodges, Kathy Daigle, and of course, Delta Pick-Mello, do an incredible job of making this whole thing work. It's really quite impressive to see all the ideas discussed throughout the year come to fruition on the opening day of Polar. The first weekend was an extraordinary success. It is very labor intensive for all involved but, well worth it helps keep all of the railroad's programs functioning.

This coming week, the MOW Team schedule will return to normal. Tuesday and Thursday evenings, the north door of the Erecting Shop will slide open by 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday, the doughnuts will return to the scene at 8 o'clock a.m. sharp. We have several projects to handle out on the line before the first train departs for the North Pole. To all the volunteers and supporters of the MOW Team, thank you very much.

Happy Hot Chocolate and see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Clem and Pam take on the spike barrel



Chris installs a drain valve on the Kalamazoo's air tank



SP 6051, the north-end power for Polar Express, departing the depot