

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 17, 2017. Polar Express 2017 is in the final stretch as is your MOW Team's work year. So, let's get you up to date on all your MOW Team's activities before the hot chocolate stops flowing.

It was a holly jolly time in the Erecting Shop on Tuesday as Pat Scholzen, Alan Hardy, Anthony Filamor, Chris Howard, Cliff Hayes, Joe Margucci, Dave Wolf, Frank Werry, and Heather Kearns got the MOW week started. The Team needs to get the derrick car working again to lift and move several sticks of 115-pound rail left behind the MOW container in Old Sacramento by the contractor working on the J Street crossing. So, Anthony and Chris H. removed the derrick car's gas tank so that they could drain of its old, rotten gas. While Alan continued working on building a new flatcar that will be for the dedicated use of the hydraulic power units and hydraulic tools, Joe, Cliff, Pat, and Dave took on the repairs of the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger. You will recall that, several weeks ago, the seal on its turntable hydraulic cylinder failed rendering the machine inoperable. Removing the cylinder so that it can be repaired is a bit of a challenge because it is located deep within the machine. Joe descended into the pit under the 125 and figured out how it's attached to the machine. Then he and Cliff came up with a plan for its removal. With Dave and Pat's help, they began the process of disconnecting it and capping off the hydraulic lines. Next week, they'll drop the cylinder and get it to our hydraulic cylinder repair vendor. With that, the evening came to an end with the Team pleased with its progress.

Thursday, the mighty Weed Team finished clearing a disgustingly overgrown portion on the east side of the Hood line located at MP 13.2. Mike Taylor, Ed Kottal, and Steve Wilson used all the contrivances possessed by the Weedies to force the vegetative invasion to retreat. Last week, the Weedies defeated the green menace on the west side of the track. Ed demonstrated his mastery with the chain saw and took out a record number of impinging tree branches. Folks, this incredible team of volunteers does remarkable work to, not only keep the Hood dream alive but, also, keep the SSRR Mainline free of vegetation defects. Always remember that, without the mighty Weed Team, we couldn't run trains.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Alan, Heather, Chris H., Kyle Blackburn, Mike Harris, Anthony, and Chris Carlson kept the home fires burning. The Team possesses an old heavy-duty flatcar that has wheels with seven-inch treads. We think it was built for a logging railroad in the early part of the 20th century. Unfortunately, we've been unable to use it out on our line because the wide-wheel treads do not interact well with self-guarded frogs. So, Alan and Mike H. began the process of replacing the wide wheels with conventional wheels. To do that, they had to turn it upside down. Once turned over, Chris H. took on the removal of the axles. Chris C. went to work on the MOW Team's light-plant. One of the lights stopped working. Chris C. managed to get it working again and soon, the light of a thousand suns flooded the Boiler Shop. Heather filled several jerry-cans with diesel fuel. Kyle welded a cross-piece onto the Nolan track-cart mounting bracket on the rail-mounted air-compressor that Alan designed and installed to provide it with more stability. Again, it was another very productive evening for your MOW Team.

The wind was howling like nobody's business Saturday morning when Alan, Anthony, Heather, Clem Meier, Bill Hastings, Michael Florentine, Harry Voss, John Rexroth, Steve Nemeth, Mike Miller, Frank, Pam Tatro, Art Fluter, Chris Carlson, John Chandler, and the doughnuts arrived. Continuing the ballasting of the Sutterville Line to the Zoo was the plan for the day. Mike F. hopped on the back-hoe and Frank Werry took-on the front-end loader and headed to Setzer ready to fill ballast hopper cars with rock. Steve and Harry fired-up the Kalamazoo tug and Chris C. ran the ballast regulator both of which pulled hopper cars. At Setzer, Frank and Mike F. filled the ballast cars with rock. Steve in the Kalamazoo pulled the first load of rock down to the Sutterville Line where Clem and Anthony disgorged it along the west side of the track. Soon, Chris C. brought the regulator with the other two ballast cars. But first, he deployed the plow and spread the rock along the line. Then, Mike M. dropped rock between the rails. At Setzer, because we like to "share the wealth" when it comes to operating machines, Bill took over the front-end loader and John R. climbed aboard the back hoe to fill the hoppers for the next round. Meanwhile, back on the Sutterville Line, Pam, Heather, and John C. next disgorged rock from the hoppers when the Kalamazoo arrived. Throughout the morning, the regulator and Kalamazoo shuttled rock back and forth between Setzer and Sutterville Road. Between them, six separate loads of rock were transported and spread. That's a lot of rock. But, you know how it is. It wouldn't be a Maintenance of Way day without a mechanical failure. Suddenly, the regulator died. Luckily, Chris C., Heather, Mike M., and Art were right on it and quickly figured out that the engine was starved for fuel. Heather raced back to the Shops for tools and equipment. Chris C. removed the primary fuel filter and found it filled with gunk. When Heather returned, new filters were installed, and the regulator fired right up. Since the Team was under a mandate to return to Old Sacramento early to avoid any interaction with the Polar Express, they headed back to town. Once in town, the equipment was stowed, and the Team turned its attention to Switch 101, the 150/560-Interchange Track switch. It had become inordinately difficult to throw. Mike M. assessed the problem and offered a solution which the Team implemented. Bill and Anthony removed the south-most connecting rod between the transit clips and repositioned it. That did the trick. With that, the Team packed up and headed back to the Shops very pleased with the day's accomplishments.

The lovely and talented Ramsey from the All Aboard Desk has released this month's hour-bar recipients and several MOW Team members were amongst them: Anthony with 1,500 hours; Mike Willis with 3,500 hours; Mike F. with 4,500 hours; and Alan with a whopping 28,000 hours. Many thanks to Anthony, Mike W., Mike F., and Alan for their continued dedication to building a better railroad!

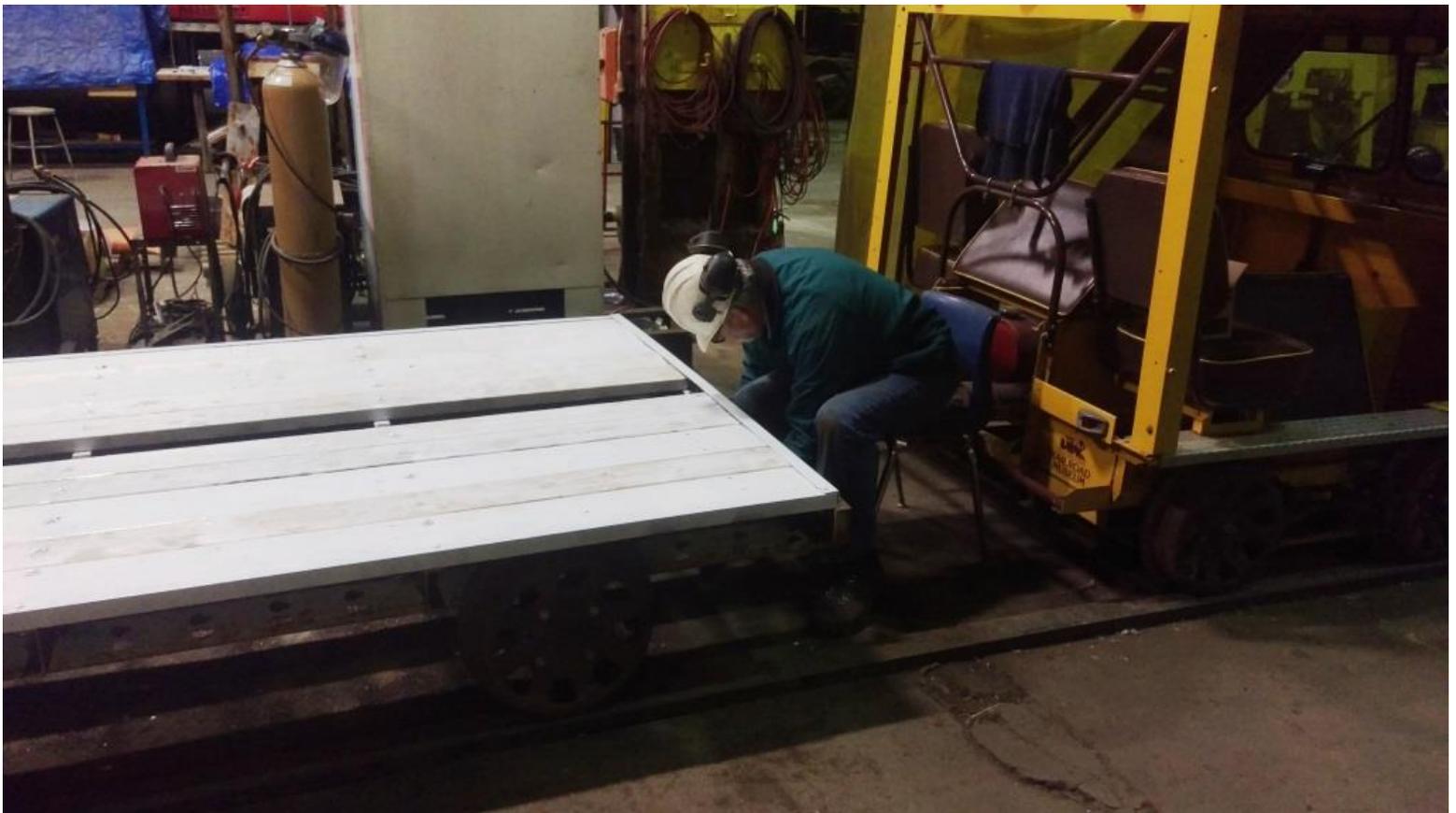
This coming week, the Team will gather on Tuesday and Thursday starting at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. The Weed Team will return to Hood on Thursday. 8:30 a.m. is the call time. MOW is taking Saturday off in deference to the Christmas holiday. So, **no MOW on Saturday**. Merry Christmas to everyone and a multitude of thanks to the dedicated, hard-working folks of the MOW Team! Hot Chocolate!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris C., and Richard.



Anthony drains the old rotten fuel out of the derrick car's gas-tank



Alan installs a tow-hook on the hydraulic-tool flatcar that he has designed and built



Joe, under the 125, finds the wonky hydraulic cylinder on its turntable and begins the process of removal



Alan describes how this flatcar that he's been building will accommodate the hydraulic power units and tools



Chris C. returning the MOW Team's light-plant to service



Fixed by Chris C., the MOW Team's light plant now puts out more lumens than Alpha Canis Majoris, the brightest star in the night sky



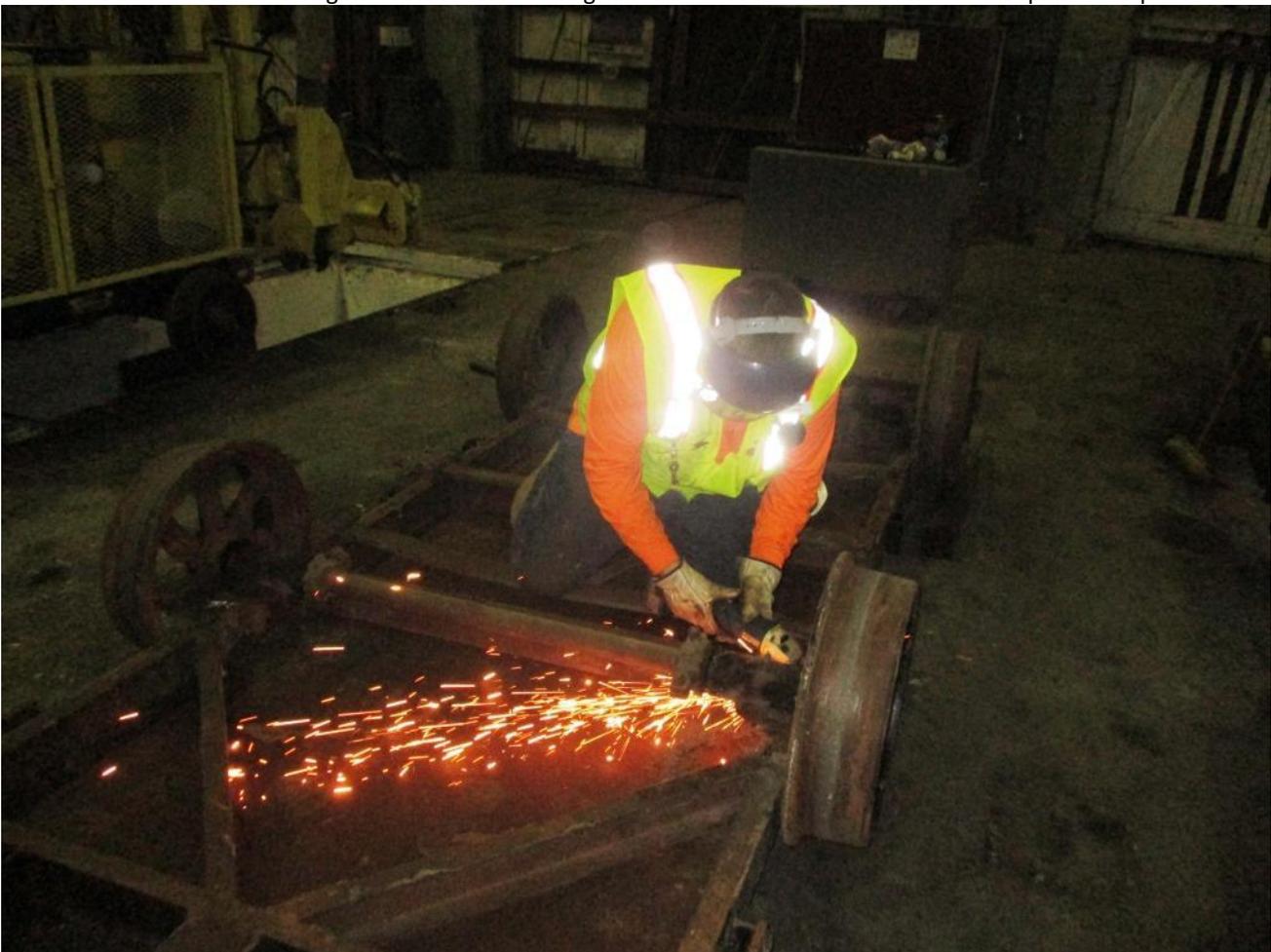
Mike H. and Alan figure out a way to turn this wide-wheeled flatcar upside-down



Heather fills jerry-cans with diesel



Kyle welds a cross-brace on the mounting brackets that Alan designed for the Nolan Flat Car on the air-compressor to provide more stability



Chris H. begins the process of removing the axels on the wide-wheeled flatcar



At Setzer, Mike F. in the back-hoe fills a hopper car with ballast-rock



Clem and Anthony discharge rock from a side-dump hopper at the transition point between the I-5 Bridge and solid ground



Pam and Anthony continue dropping rock further down the hill



Chris C. brings in the ballast regulator with the plow down to spread the rock about the track



Mike M. disgorges rock from one of the center-dump hoppers



Mike M. keeps a close eye on the action as Chris C. in the regulator spreads the rock evenly about the track



Steve and Harry head-up the Kalamazoo's ballasting efforts



With another load of rock on site, Pam and Heather discharge it onto the west side of the rail



The next load is filled Mike F. on the back-hoe



Bill takes over loader duties and fills another ballast hopper



Back on the Zoo line, Pam and John C. apply more rock to east side of the track



Steve keeps the Kalamazoo rolling slowly south as John C. and Pam disgorge rock on the west rail



Meanwhile, back at Setzer, Frank fills another hopper with rock



Frank grabs another bucket-full of ballast rock



John R. on the back-hoe comes in for another scoop of rock...



...And quickly transfigurates into Batman!



Back in Old Sac., Polar Express Onboard Mechanical Joe Galipeau joins Bill, Steve, Frank, and Mike F. in a manual run-around of the hoppers



As Art and John R protect the I Street crossing, Bill guides Steve in the Kalamazoo to a stop on the North Turntable Lead



Frank acts as brakeman for the ballast regulator which returned to town under its own power



Steve and Mike M. top-off the Kalamazoo's fuel tank with a little red-diesel



Bill and Anthony make adjustments to the position of the connecting rod on Switch 101



Chris C. inspects the new position of the connecting rod on the transit clip to see if the adjustment did the trick