

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 18, 2016 – the final MOW Team update for 2016. Yes, even yours truly is taking a day off next week. So, let's get the last update of the year started before 2016 fades into history.

Chris Carlson, Pat Scholzen, Michael Florentine, Cliff Hayes, Joe Margucci, Mike Harris, Frank Werry, Alan Hardy, Gene Peck, and Harry Voss gathered in the Erecting Shop on Tuesday with the primary goal of removing the main shear lift-cylinder on the tie-shear. It needs to be sent out for repairs. Alan began by un-bolting the final guide-rod. Mike F. and Cliff climbed on top of the machine and attached a strap. The forklift was brought in and lifted the guide-rod out. Next, Mike F. got a strap around the lift-cylinder. Mike H., Alan, and Mike F. then shepherded the cylinder as it was slowly lifted out of the tie-shear by the forklift. Chris and Frank got it situated on the ground. Frank brought the MOW Team's trusty Chevy Truck over to the Erecting Shop so that Mike F. and Mike H. could place the 500-pound cylinder into the truck (which Alan took to our hydraulic-cylinder servicing vendor on Wednesday for rebuild). Meanwhile, Joe added five-gallons of coolant to the tamper's radiator then headed over to the Boiler Shop where he replaced the broken tail-light assembly on the front-end loader. As this week's "storm of the century" was predicted for Thursday, Frank and Mike H. fetched one of the Weed Team's chainsaw and staged it for easy retrieval in the event a tree or large limb blew-down on the tracks because of the storm. We always try to be prepared. It had been an eventful and prosperous evening.

The latest "storm of the century" rolled into Sacramento on Thursday. As such, the Boiler Shop was closed and conditions in the Rail Yards were murky. So, the evening MOW gathering was cancelled. But, a meeting for planning the extraction of the rotary snow plow from the North Firing Line Track was held in the Erecting Shop with District Superintendent, Matt Bellah, Chief Mechanical Officer, Al DiPaolo, and Manager of Track Programs, Alan Hardy. The Museum is planning on creating an interpretive exhibit about railroad snow removal techniques with the rotary snowplow as the centerpiece. Various options were discussed in detail and a decision was reached on how the extraction will take place. As the transfer-table cannot reach the North Firing Line Track, a temporary track will be built out the east side of the Firing Line tracks onto which the dynamometer-car and rotary will be moved. Then, the track will be swung over to the South Firing Line Track and they will be moved onto it. The transfer-table will then move up to the South Firing Line Track (which it can reach) to retrieve the rotary and dynamometer-car. With that, the plan for Saturday became the commencement of construction of the temporary track.

It should come as no surprise that Saturday started with doughnuts. Chris kindly provided the MOW delicacy which was enjoyed thoroughly by Alan, Heather Kearns, Steve Nemeth, Harry, John Chandler, Anthony Filamor, Frank Werry, Mike Miller, Pam Tatro, Mike F., and Andrew Storck. Two projects would be undertaken on Saturday. First, Alan would head-up the temporary track construction project. Andrew, Mike F., Mike M., Frank, John, and Steve worked with Alan. Their goal was to locate and snare nine sticks of 90-pound rail from the spare rail pile under I-5. Mike F. and John deployed both Green Machines with "stingers" and rail-tongs attached. Due to the most recent "storm of the century," it was a muddy mess under the freeway. But that didn't deter Mike M., Andrew, Frank, Steve, and Alan from scouring the pile to find their prize. John and Mike F. then went "mud'n" through the bog and began pulling the identified sticks free of the pile. Steve wanted to join the fun and go "mud'n". So, he took a turn on Green Machine 2. By lunch, the nine sticks of rail had been pulled from the pile and placed at the north end of the Boiler Shop.

Meanwhile, Harry, Pam, Heather, Chris, and Anthony headed out on to the SSRR Mainline to add ballast-rock to the area where we've been raising the track near Mile Post 1 in preparation for continuing that project when the tamper is restored to full operation. Chris and Anthony deployed the ballast regulator and pulled the ballast hopper-cars to Setzer where Harry, on the back-hoe, was waiting to fill them. Soon, the Team was ready to disgorge the rock. With Chris slowing pulling the hoppers south with the regulator, Heather and Pam did a perfect job of distributing the rock from the hoppers on west side of the track. On the next pass, Anthony joined Pam to drop rock on the east side. Next, the hoppers were cut-away from the regulator. Chris deployed the regulator's plow and spread the ballast evenly between the rails. We were now set to resume raising the track.

After lunch, Mike M., Andrew, Alan, Frank, and Chris found the necessary number of 90-pound joint-bars and bolts for the temporary track. Heather, Steve, and Mike F. headed down to the Front Street crossing to locate a stick of 110-pound rail to be used for rebuilding the frog at Switch 19. A 10-foot section was needed so, the rail-saw was loaded in the truck. At Front Street, the rail was identified and pulled out of the pile by attaching a chain to it and the hitch of the truck. Using the truck's crane, the rail was lifted and cribbing was placed beneath. The rail-saw was deployed. Steve and Mike F. then cut the necessary piece and loaded into the truck. Just then, the Polar Express passed by on its journey south to the North Pole as we were packing up. At that point, the Team headed back to the Shops and called it a day.

Polar Express 2016 is now in the history books. Undoubtedly, this was the smoothest operating Polar Express in its 10-year history. The Foundation staff did an outstanding job planning it and its execution by the volunteers of the SSRR and CSRM was flawless. Polar Express manager, Steve Doris, recently summed-up its success by saying, *"The reason we are so successful is that everybody from Maintenance of Way, Car Department, Onboard Mechanical, operating crews, onboard crews, CPPS staff, and hospitality all make it their personal responsibility to make our Polar the best it can be. Our crews are all here because they want to be here and that makes all the difference!"* Truer words were never spoken. Indeed, it's the wonderful volunteers that keep the Museum and its programs alive – and they always come through. Thank you, Steve!

Although this is the last update of the year, the MOW Team's work in 2016 is not done. Tuesday and Thursday of this week, the Team will meet at the Erecting Shop at or before 5 o'clock as usual. **MOW is taking Christmas Eve off. So, there'll be no MOW on Saturday.** But, our work will resume on Tuesday, December 27th, Thursday, December 29th, and Saturday, December 31st (for the final pink box of the year). Merry Christmas to everyone. Enjoy the holiday and thanks, again, to the incredible volunteers of the CSRM who make all the difference!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Alan removes the bolts holding the guide-rod for the main shear lift-cylinder in place



Alan, Mike F., and Chris prepare for the shear lift-cylinder to be removed



The lift-cylinder is out. It only weighs about 500-pounds...



Mike F. and Mike H. secure the lift-cylinder in the bed of the truck



Frank and Mike F. test the chainsaw before staging it for quick retrieval in the event of a downed tree or limb



Mike F. and John deploy both Green Machines for a little fun in the "mud'n" in the muddy muck



But first, Mike F. uses GM2 to lift the ballast-hopper cars onto the track



Andrew grabs the rail-tongs from Big Green to connect to one of the 90-pound rails identified by Frank, Steve, Mike M., and Alan



John on Big Green grabs a rail and pulls it through the mud



Steve, on GM2, extracts another rail from the muddy hole while John, on Big Green, gets ready for another round of "mud'n"



Steve proves that the Green Machines are "all-terrain" forklifts...



John on Big Green heads back into the muddy hole



Meanwhile, down at Setzer, Harry on the back-hoe loads the side-dump hopper with ballast-rock



Harry fills the center-dump hopper with rock



Chris and Anthony in the ballast-regulator pull the filled hoppers up the hill



Near Mile Post 1, the ballast regulator is ready to start spreading ballast



Pam and Heather discharge rock on the west side of the track



Now Pam drops ballast rock down the center of the track



Chris deploys the plows and spreads the rock evenly



At Front Street, Mike F. and Steve hook a chain to the stick of 110-pound rail to pull it out of the pile



Mike F. attaches rail-tongs to the truck's crane to lift the rail sufficiently to place cribbing beneath it



At the controls of the crane, Steve lifts the rail as Mike F. shoves a piece of old tie beneath it



Sparks fly as Mike F. begins cutting the rail. Steve uses a shovel as a spark-shield



Steve and Mike F. slice through the rail



Mike F. maneuvers the crane to load the cut piece into the truck



Steve guides the cut rail around low-hanging branches as he and Mike F. load the rail into the truck



Heather waves to the Polar Express as it passes our work site on its way south to the North Pole



Day is done: Frank guides Mike F. on Big Green as the hopper cars are removed from the track