

Greetings! This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for February 22, 2015. This week, your MOW Team made progress on a variety of fronts. So, let's get this update fired-up before all progress is brought to a halt.

Monday was Presidents' Day and Chris Carlson spent his vacation day in the Shops, along with Alan Hardy, working on the electrical system of the pink Ballast Regulator – a.k.a. the “USS Sea Tiger” (named for pink submarine in the movie “Operation Petticoat”). The machine, itself, works great! But there are a few electrical issues that need to be address before taking it out on the line. Fortunately, Chris is an electrical expert. He is rewiring the control stand in the cab as well as the lights and horn. Alan continued working on the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger. He's building a roof for the cab in order to make the machine more compliant with 49 CFR Part 214.515(b). Plus this will help secure the machine's cab from murdering Goths and Vandals in Old Sacramento.

Tuesday was a big day for the Weed Team. Mike Taylor, Dale Parker, Dave Megeath, Joe Galipeau, and Al Utzig were evaluated by Sacramento County regulators on the application of chemical defoliants. Of course, the Weed Team passed inspection with flying colors. Joe and Al were watched by the inspectors while they completed spraying of the 560 Track. Following the inspection, Dale backed the crew truck with the 65 gallon spray rig down the erecting shop apron so the Team could finish spraying the transfer table slots. After a celebratory lunch they moved to the new MOW Compound and sprayed between the 560 Track and old 150 Track. Folks, the Weedies are true professionals. They train, they're inspected, and they mitigate the vegetation issues that would otherwise inundate the Sacramento Southern Railroad. Congratulations to this amazing group of volunteers!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Alan, Frank Werry, Scott Morrison, Heather Kearns, Mike Harris, and Harry Voss were all on hand to accomplish greatness. Scott, Mike H., Alan, and Harry continued their yeoman efforts at restoring the tie shear to operation. Mike H. climbed under the machine to install the new air reservoir. Pat and Cliff implemented Alan's design for the roof of the 125. They managed to construct it out of parts from an old motorcar cab. Frank, Heather, and Alan spent the evening putting together all the Part 214 training materials for training class on Wednesday. Tedious but, necessary work as the federal government requires MOW to provide this training to all of its “employees.”

Speaking of Part 214 training, 46 folks attended the first session on Wednesday. Strong coffee and sugary cookies kept everyone wide awake. After the grueling exam (required by federal law) – on which everyone scored 100 – Mike T. gave his annual presentation on the rules and regulations regarding the use of chemical defoliants out on the line. Then Alan gave a new presentation on the safe use of hand tools and working around machines safely. A second session will be given on **Saturday, February 28th at 9 o'clock a.m. in the East Theater** of the Museum for those who couldn't make it on Wednesday. All the “cool-kids” get 214 qualified. So, be cool. Be there.

Thursday, the quiet calm of the Erecting Shop was interrupted by the roarin' of the tie shear's turbo-charged Detroit Diesel. Alan, Cliff, Frank, and Mike H. managed to get the shear mechanism fully operational. They had the shears scissoring open and closed as if it were biting at the bit to start chomping ties. The components of the tie shears are all functioning as they should. There's still work to do including putting the machine back together. But, this was a milestone moment for your MOW Team. It was an evening for the record book.

It's always a good day when the MOW Team can welcome a new member. Saturday, Mike Willis joined the Team and got to experience the joy of the pink-box in person. Also, the Team welcomed Bob Ress back to Saturday service. Joining Mike W. and Bob were Chris, Harry, Heather, Alan, Frank W., Frank Squire, Clem Meier, Pam Tatro, Mike Miller, and Michael Florentine. Chris and Frank S. worked in the Shops on the *Sea Tiger* while the rest of the team headed out on the line to continue changing out ties. Mike M. grabbed a bundle of ties with the Green Machine, Frank W. took on the tamper, Heather handled the motorcar consist, and Alan secured the scarifier. The Jackson 125 tie exchanger headed up the train. At Mile Post 2.2, Clem, Pam, Bob, Mike W. and Mike F. pulled spikes and dug out the ends of the marked ties. The 125 came in and pulled out bad ties at an incredible rate. Several ties had ends that were so rotten that the 125 couldn't grab them. So, a custom-built ram was used to shove them out. Alan designed and Cliff built this special attachment that worked beyond expectations. Here's a link to a short video that Bob took of the 125 shoving a tie with the ram attachment: <http://tinyurl.com/mk7gm7o>. Notice how it grabs the rails and lifts the track to relieve vertical pressure on the tie before shoving it out. Amazing machine. Fearing that we were getting ahead of ourselves, we stopped pulling at 21 ties. After all, we still needed to insert, plate, and spike new ties (the most time-consuming part of the process). Alan brought in the scarifier. The three Mikes positioned new ties, and pulled them into place using the scarifier's inserter function. Then, they, along with Frank, nipped, plated, and spiked the new ties. With the 125, we could have pulled 50, 60, maybe even a hundred bad ties in a day. But, we have to replace the ties we pull out and, until we can mechanize the plating and spiking process, we'll have to restrain ourselves. Yes, it was a good day. Mike W., when asked if he found the experience, “interesting and rewarding,” he said, “I loved it!” For those who are hesitant, take that as inspiration to come on out and join the MOW Team!

This coming week, the Weed Team will continue weed spraying down the Sutterville Line and then Setzer. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. In the evening on Tuesday and Thursday, the Shops will be open for business at 5 o'clock or before. Saturday, the Team will gather for more fun out on the line. Frank W. will head up the crew as Alan and Chris will be conducting the second iteration of Part 214 training at 9 o'clock in the East Theater. As always, many thanks to all the incredible volunteers and supporters of the SSRR MOW Team!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Working on the *Sea Tiger's* electrical system IS vacation for Chris!



Now that's a mighty fine looking line-up of track machines!



Pam, our Designated Supervisor of the Mattocks Tool (DSMT), and Mike M. dig out the tie-ends so that the 125 can grab them easier



Pam takes a breather as Clem takes a turn at the mattocks digging out the end of a nasty tie



Sniff, sniff – is that the smell of bacon? No, it's an equipment hog! Oink, oink!



The custom-made ram attachment, designed by Alan and built by Cliff, is deployed on the 125 and works beyond expectations



Mike W., Mike F., and Alan spin the 125 on its turntable



Mike W. is very impressed with the way the 125 whips rotten ties out from under the track



Mike M. and Mike F. toss new ties off the flatcar to replace those bad ties pulled by the 125



Alan operates the scarifier while Mike F. uses the inserter function to pull in a new tie



Mike M. places a new tie using the inserter function on the scarifier



Three Mikes and a Frank: Mike W. nips-up the east end of the tie while Mike F. sets spikes. To the west, Mike M. sets spikes while Frank nips-up the tie.



Mike M. drives a spike with the pneumatic spiker as Frank nips-up the tie



At the end of a good day, Mike M. takes the Big Green Machine back to the Shops