

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for March 13, 2016. El Niño descended on Sacramento in a torrent this week. But, that didn't dampen your MOW Team's spirit. So, let's not dampen your spirits by delaying the commencement of this update any further.

A smattering of rain fell on the Erecting Shop Tuesday evening but, that didn't stop Gene Peck, Frederick Carr, Pat Scholzen, Harry Voss, Heather Kearns, Mike Willis, and Frank Werry from getting stuff done. The focus of the evening's activities surrounded the Canron BEB-17 ballast regulator (fondly known as the "*USS Sea Tiger*"). A pesky air-leak has developed in its compressed-air system. Fred and Harry were determined to track it down. This was not an easy hunt as the machine was losing significant pressure quickly without any obvious strident sound of escaping air. It took a while but, with Gene's help, they determined that a check-valve on the air-dryer may be the culprit. Heather worked on reactivating a pump-engine for a potential auxiliary water tank to accompany the Weed Team's spray rig. Such would alleviate the need for the Weedies to leave the line in search of additional water. Indeed, it was an evening well spent by your MOW Team.

On Thursday, more than a smattering of rain trickled on the tin roof of the Erecting Shop. It was a downright deluge. Frank, Fred, Heather, and Harry found the roar of the rain reverberating through the cavernous building as it impacted the tin roof to be an interesting effect. Fred and Harry removed the check-valve and bypassed the air-dryer on the *Sea Tiger*. Although it reduced the rapidity of the air loss, the problem remained. Air was still escaping someplace. Heather and Frank installed a new starter-motor on the A-5 motorcar – a bit of a tricky operation as the location of where the starter goes in the engine is not very convenient. But, of course, they prevailed.

Providence smiled upon the Team on Saturday with a temporary deferment of El Niño – at least in the morning. Providence also blessed Steve Nemeth, Pamela Tatro, Mike W., Michael Florentine, Harry, Josh Iliac, Steve Wilson, and John Rexroth with a bounty of doughnuts. The goal for the day was to insert the final 14 ties necessary to restore the track between Front Street and Switch 14 to full service. At Front Street and at the switch, multiple ties were removed in order to lower the road-bed so that the new larger rail would line-up with the existing track. These are the ties that needed inserting. So, Steve N. and Mike F. headed to Old Sacramento to bring the scarifier-inserter and Kalamazoo tug on line – always a time-consuming job as all the anti-vandalism shields have to be removed. Pam, Harry, Josh, and Steve W. loaded up the MOW Team's trusty Chevy Truck with all the doo-dads and thingamajigs we'd need at the job-site. Meanwhile, at Front Street, Team Signal's commander-in-chief, Dale Parker, was awaiting our arrival to take the signal system out of service so that we could operate machines within the circuit without triggering the gates. In relative quick fashion, the Team was on site. First things first, the extension-drum on the scarifier needed to be attached. Josh and Mike W. held the drum in place (which weighs about 60 pounds) while Steve N. tightened-down the securing bolts. Then, we were off to the races. We started at the south end by the switch and pull the ties in from the west side of the track. Mike F., guided by Mike W., scarified-out the tie cribs. With Steve N. skillfully maneuvering the tug, Steve W. and Josh dropped new ties off the flatcars and lined them up with the freshly scarified cribs. Then, with Mike F. in the scarifier-inserter, Josh, Steve W., and Mike W. guided the ties into place. It took a little effort as some of the ties were going in at too steep an angle. So, Mike W., the two Steves, Pam, and Josh took care of that issue by digging under the ends of the ties. With the seven ties at the south end inserted, it was time to take the scarifier for a spin. The ties at the north end had to be inserted from the east thus requiring the scarifier be turned. As the operator in the cab during the spin, Mike F. called it an "E-ticket ride!" Again, Steve N. in the tug brought in ties. Steve W. and Josh lined them up. Mike F. in the scarifier dug out the cribs, and pulled in the ties with the inserter function. In the interim, Pam was taking care of another important job. She was painting the brand-new, bright and shiny copper bond-wires a shade of dull-gray. Bright and shiny copper is too attractive to miscreants who would pilfer such to make a quick 30 cents. With all the ties in place, the next job would be installing the tie-plats, spiking, and tamping them.

Following lunch, the Team returned to the job-site just as our El Niño reprieve came to an end. Within a half-hour of our return, sprinkles had turned into a torrent. So, the Team decided to call it a day. They cleaned-up the job-site, filled in any remaining holes in the ballast, strapped down the remaining ties on the flatcar, and headed north. In town, Frank Werry joined our happy band following his day in the annual brakeman training class. His timing was impeccable and was available to handle the switching in the Yard. By now, the rain was quite persistent as the machines were switched around and shields re-erected. Back at the Shops, the Team cleaned out the truck and put all the doo-dads and thingamajigs away. Although the day was truncated, we did accomplish our goal of getting the ties in the ground. Next week, we'll plate, spike, and tamp – and maybe run the ballast regulator over the area. With that, the project will be done.

Ramsey at the All Aboard Desk released the latest hour-bar recipients and our own Steve Wilson is amongst them. He has reached that all-important milestone of 250 hours – most of which, I dare say, were with the MOW Team. Congratulations Steve and thanks for your help!

This coming week promises to be a bit dryer. On Tuesday and Thursday the Shops crews will meet at its regular appointed hour – at or before 5 o'clock. The Mighty Weed Team will be busy, as well. On Thursday, the Weedies will take the big rail-mounted spray-rig out to combat the growing green invasion with blue-brew. Meet at the Shops at 8:30. It's an amazing, dedicated crew of volunteers that takes on all this heavy work to keep the trains rolling. Many thanks to the fantastic MOW Team volunteers, of course, and to all of our friends and supporters out there. Your backing and encouragement means a great deal to all of us who work keep the line in service.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Fred in the cab of the ballast regulator – a.k.a. *USS Sea Tiger* – making adjustments to the control stand while on the quest for air leaks



Heather attempts to reanimate a long-dead pump-motor



Fred bypassing the air-dryer on the regulator as a trouble-shooting measure



Frank connecting the new starter-motor on the A-5 motorcar



Brother Mike W., keeper of the most Holy and Sacred Pink Box



Steve and Pam strap-down the ties on the flatcar so that they won't roll off inadvertently during travel



And, they're off!



Josh holds the extension-drum in place while Steve N. tightens its bolts



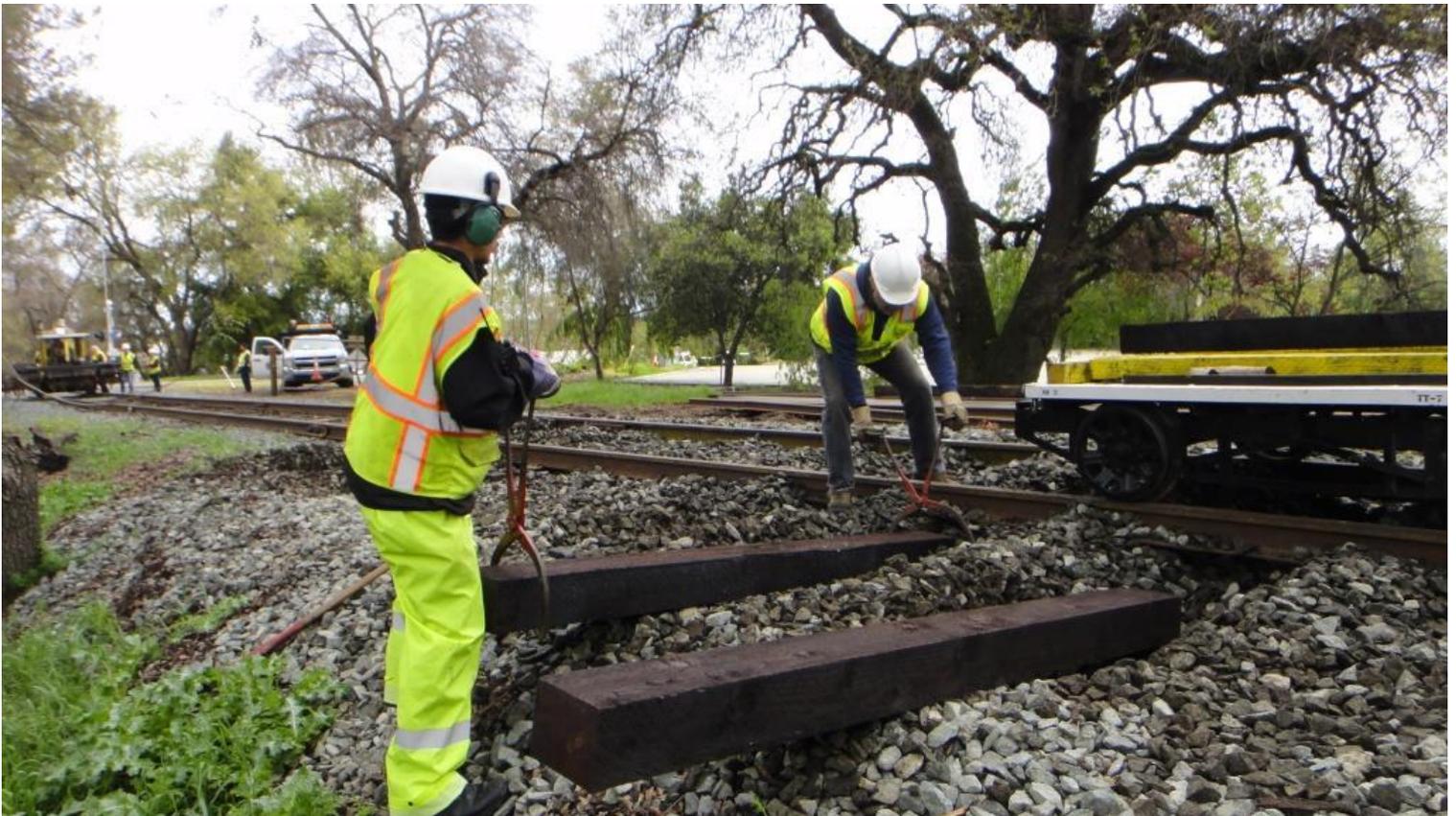
Then, Mike W. removes the guide-pins



Mike W. provides guidance to Mike F. in the scarifier to line him up



Steve W. and Josh retrieve ties from the flatcar...



And then line them up for insertion



Using the inserter function on the scarifier, Mike F. in the scarifier pulls in a tie guided by Josh



A little digging under and "shimmying" the ties was necessary to get them to sit level



Pam, on shine-removal patrol, paints the bright copper bond-wires a dull shade of gray



Steve W. guides a tie in place



As the scarifier is spun, Mike F. takes an "E-ticket" ride



Josh and Steve W. line-up more ties for insertion



The Kalamazoo tug is in the steady hands of Steve N.



Mike W. guides the next tie into position



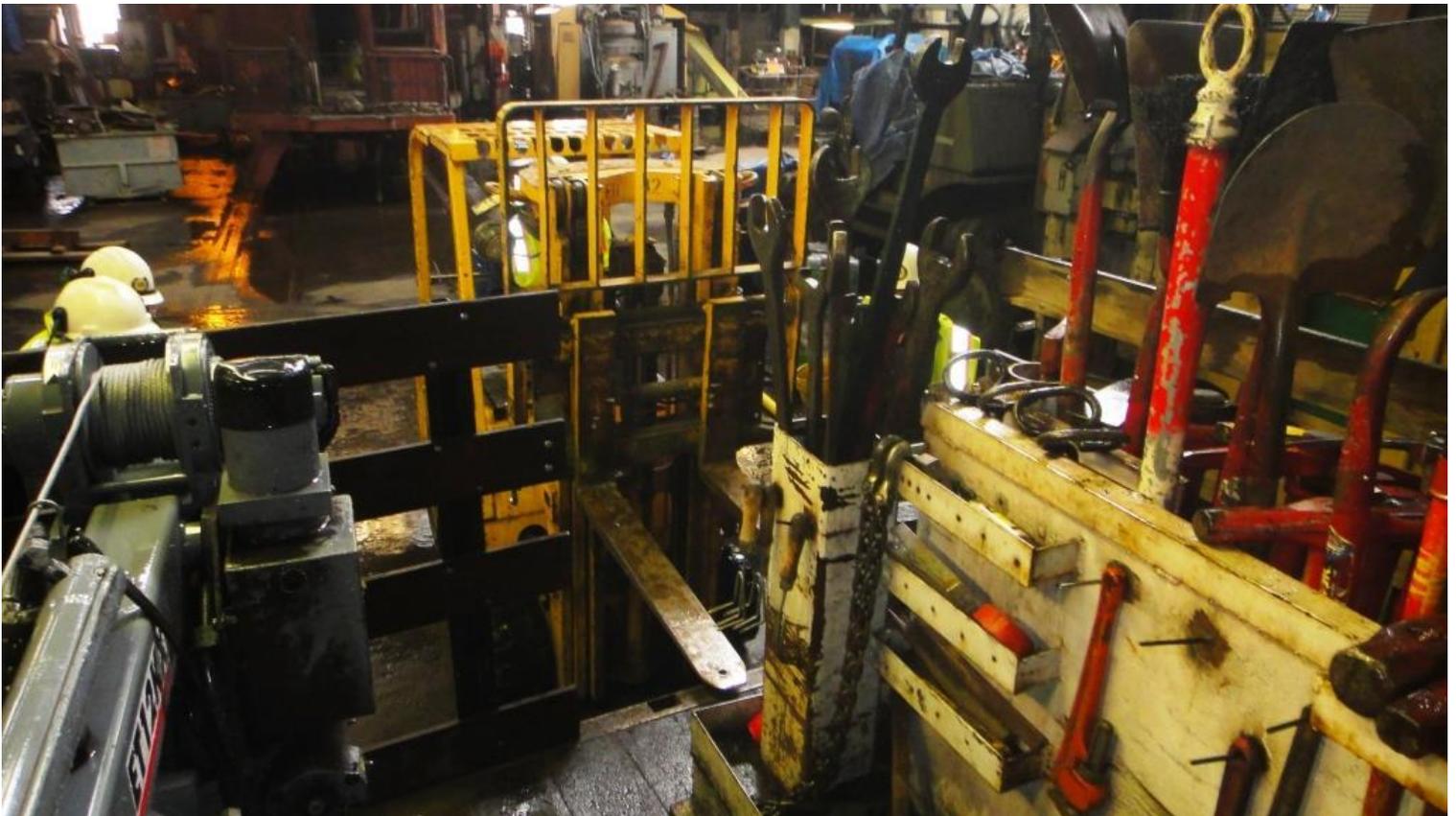
Josh and Steve N. clear a path for the tie by digging out the rock that has bunched-up under the west rail



Mike W. connects the inserting cable to the tie as Steve W. digs a bit out from under it



Harry, Mike F., Mike W. and Steve W. fill in holes in the ballast as the rain starts to fall



At the end of the day, Steve W. on the forklift removes the doo-dads and thingamajigs from the back of the truck