

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for March 20, 2016. Ah, spring has sprung and it's becoming a bit brighter and warmer in the Erecting Shop. So, let's not dull anyone's senses by delaying this update any further.

The Mighty Weed Team was out in force both on Tuesday and Thursday. Mike Taylor, Heather Kearns, and Joe Galipeau constituted Tuesday's team. Spring brings forth green-growth in all the wrong places – at least according to 49 CFR Part 213.37. The goal was to coat the flourishing fauna in Old Sacramento from the turntable south to K Street with blue-brew. By day's end, the 2016 spraying of Old Sac. was complete. Thursday was an exceptionally long day for the Weedies. Mike T., Dave Megeath, Heather, and Jeff Allen, set off to finish spraying the SSRR Mainline from Baths to Sutterville Road and beyond. Using the rail-mounted spray-rig, they took on every green-goblin they encountered fouling the track. At Sutterville Road Carol Nelson joined the Weedies. Single handedly, she has landscaped the line between Sutterville and South Land Park Drive. Carol has made a significant and visually appealing improvement to what was once bare and litter-filled ground. By mid-afternoon, the spraying of the Mainline was complete and the Team put spray-rig away for the year. Next, using a three-gallon tank backpack spray-rig, Mike T. battled back against the ever-growing foe around the Shops building, turn-table, and transfer-table runway in the Rail Yards. Folks, the entire railroad is blessed to have such dedicated and diligent volunteers taking on these not so glamorous jobs. Without them, we couldn't run trains. We all owe our merry band of Weedies our appreciation and admiration!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, and Harry Voss kept the home-fires burning – literally. Fred and Gene continued their efforts at tracking down air-leaks on the ballast regulator. Cliff got the final new support-strut installed on the derrick crane. Then Pat painted them a bright shade of MOW Team safety yellow. Heather pointed out that the bucket hooks on the front-end loader were bent and one was cracked. So Cliff unfurled his welding equipment to straighten them out then harnessed the heat of the sun to make the hooks malleable. Gene, using a large crescent-wrench and whacking tools, bent the hooks straight. Finally, Cliff welded a cracked hook. Now, it's good as new. Job well done by everyone!

Thursday, Frank Werry joined Cliff, Fred, and Heather in Old Sacramento to stage the track equipment for a quick departure on Saturday morning. Conductor Heather led the Team and planned the moves and, while she and Frank rearranged the placement of the machines, Fred and Cliff took the opportunity to install a new governor on the scarifier's air-compressor. Once installed, they tested it, ran the machine up and down the track a few times, set and released the brakes, and declared it "fixed." Back at the Shops, Heather loaded the tool-caddie into the truck while Frank and Cliff took out all the garbage. What could be more fun? Yes, another productive evening!

Doughnuts arrived with Chris Carlson on Saturday morning. "Sugar-up," he commanded and Heather Kearns, Frank Werry, Steve Wilson, Mike Miller, Michael Florentine, and Chris Machado obeyed dutifully. The Team would head back to Front Street again to finish up the rail-replacement/upsizing project. Heather showed-up in Old Sac. extra early to open up the tamper and move it into a position out of the way of the Sacramento City College Railroad Program field training which was going on. Al Utzig of Team Signals met us at the work-site where he deactivated the grade-crossing warning system so that we could operate track machines within the Approach Circuit without activating gates. Then, he couldn't resist joining in with all the MOW fun. Nipper-bars, which are like giant steel spoons that can be shoved under the bottom edge of a tie to lift it flush with the base of the rail, were deployed. When spiking the track, the tie must be flush against the base of the rail otherwise the tie-plate and tie will giggle all over the place threatening proper gauge. After tie plates were inserted between the ties and the base of the rail, Frank, Al, Steve, and Chris C. nipped-up the ties as Mike F., Chris M., and Mike M. set spikes. This was a bit of a time consuming effort as ties have a tendency to resist movement when compressed by rock. For those ties that were already true with the base of the rail, the nippers were used to lift the rail up in order to insert plates. After the plates were in place and the spikes set, Chris M., Mike F., and Steve took turns driving the spikes with the pneumatic spike-driver. Next, Heather brought the tamper across Front Street and began tamping the ties to compact the rock under and around them for support. This provided a good opportunity to train folks on tamper operations. First, Chris M. took the controls with Heather as trainer. Chris C. guided the tamping action from the ground. Chris M. was a quick-study and soon, he and Chris C. had a good rhythm going. Next, Steve took the center seat and, again with Heather as trainer, got the rest of the track tamped-up. They both did an outstanding job! In the afternoon, Jose Gomez joined the Team for some MOW fun. He, along with Mike M., Mike F., and Frank used a track-jack to lift the at the south comp-joint just enough to squeeze a tie-plate beneath it. Then, Mike F. interpreted old-fashion track-gang railroading by driving the spikes down with a spike-maul. With the last spikes driven, Jose declared victory. To test the track and to look for any "soft" spots or deflection, Heather ran the tamper back and forth over the area at track-speed. It looked great. Chris C. declared the track fully in service and Train Order 104, the five mile-per-hour speed restriction over the area was annulled. As Al had to depart at noon, Paul Helman from Team Signals arrived to reactivate the Front Street signal system. Saturday evening, SSRR General Manager Dick Noonan proclaimed, "This project makes the 2016 season much safer, smoother, and better for the schedule." Indeed. Truer words were never spoken. Most importantly, the track is safer for all our volunteers and passengers.

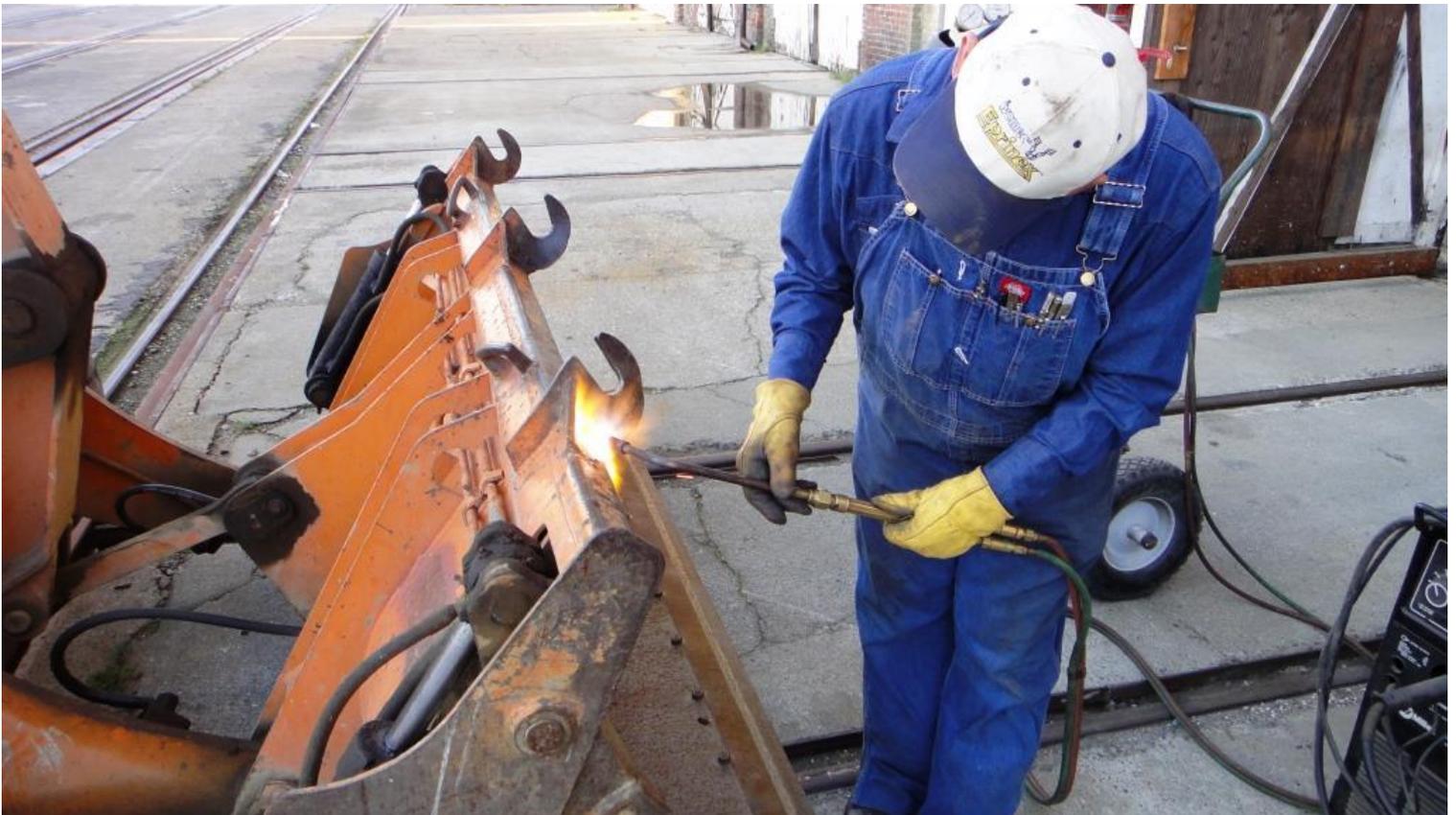
This coming week, the Shops crews will gather on Tuesday and Thursday at or before 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday, the MOW Team will be ready to roll at 8 o'clock a.m. for another adventure in track maintenance. Many thanks to the fantastic volunteers of the MOW Team and Signal Department for being there every week to make this vital improvement to the SSRR Mainline possible.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris C., and Richard.



Fred locates a leak in the regulator's air system



Cliff uses the torch to heat the hooks on the loader's bucket



Then welds the crack



Obviously, spring has sprung (but not for long...). Carol tends to the line between Sutterville Road and South Land Park Drive



Jeff piloted the motorcar pulling the spray-rig as Dave and Mike T. sprayed blue-brew on encroaching green-goblins



Mike T. with the three-gallon spray-rig backpack exterminating invasive green species along the transfer table runway



Heather taking the scarifier for a spin...



Cliff opens up the scarifier as Conductor Heather and Fred go over the plan



Cliff and Fred install the new governor on the scarifier's air-compressor



Heather loads tool-caddy into the MOW Team's trusty Chevy Truck



Signals AI deactivates the Front Street Grade Crossing Warning System so that the MOW Team's equipment can work within the circuit



Frank and Al nip the tie as Mike F. sets a spike



Chris C. nips the tie while Mike M. sets a spike



Al and Steve double-up the nipping power as Mike F. sets a spike



Now Al and Steve nip-up the rail so that Mike F. can squeeze a tie-plate beneath it



"Where's the air!" Chris M. is all set and ready drive spikes with the pneumatic spike-driver. But, no one turned on the compressor!



"That's more like it!" With the air-line fully charged, Chris M. drive spikes while Al nips-up the tie



Mike F. takes a turn with the spiker while Steve nips and Chris M. guides the air-hose



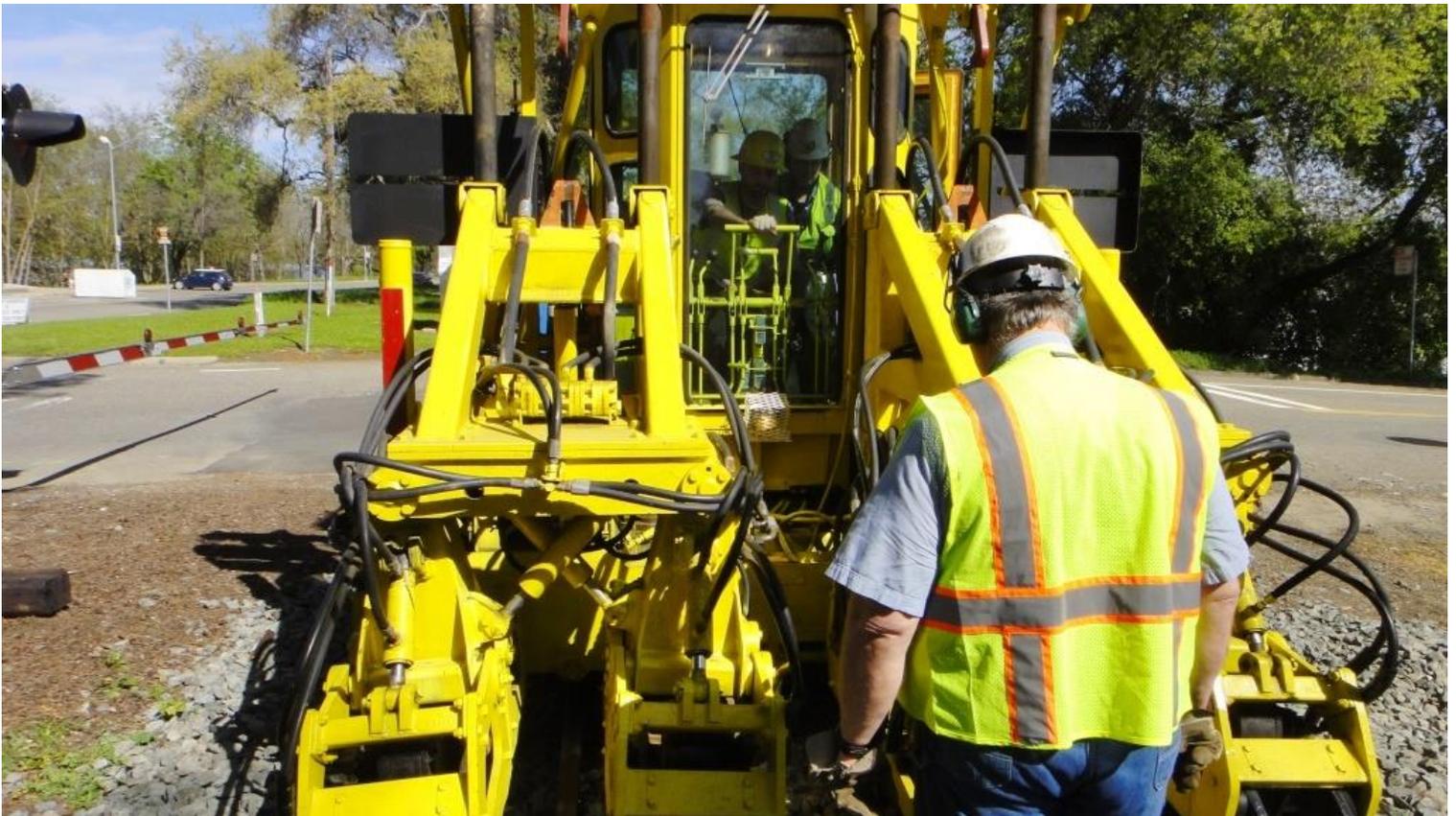
Musical spikers. Now Steve drives spikes while Chris M. and Al nip-up the tie and Frank guides the air-horse



With spiking complete, Heather brings in the tamper. Al activates the crossing gates as Chris C. prepares to guide the tamping action



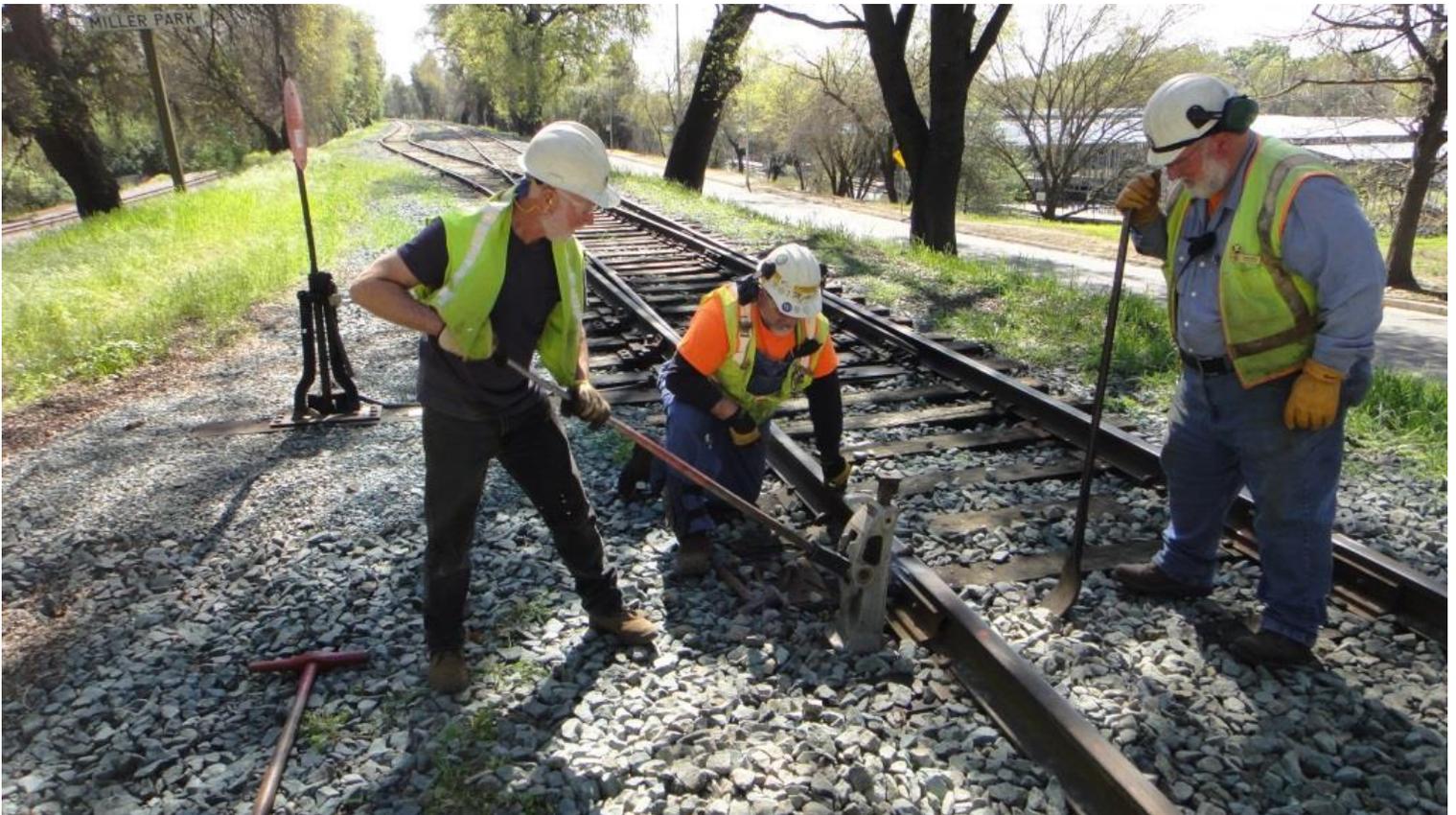
The very first tie south of the Front Street pavement is the first tie to be tamped-up



It's the Chris and Chris show! Chris M. gets his first run as tamper operator, with Heather as trainer, while Chris C. guides the tamping action



Now Steve gets his first lesson in tamper operations



Meanwhile, Mike M. jacks-up the rail at the comp-joint so that Mike F. can insert a tie-plate with Frank at the ready with a nipper-bar



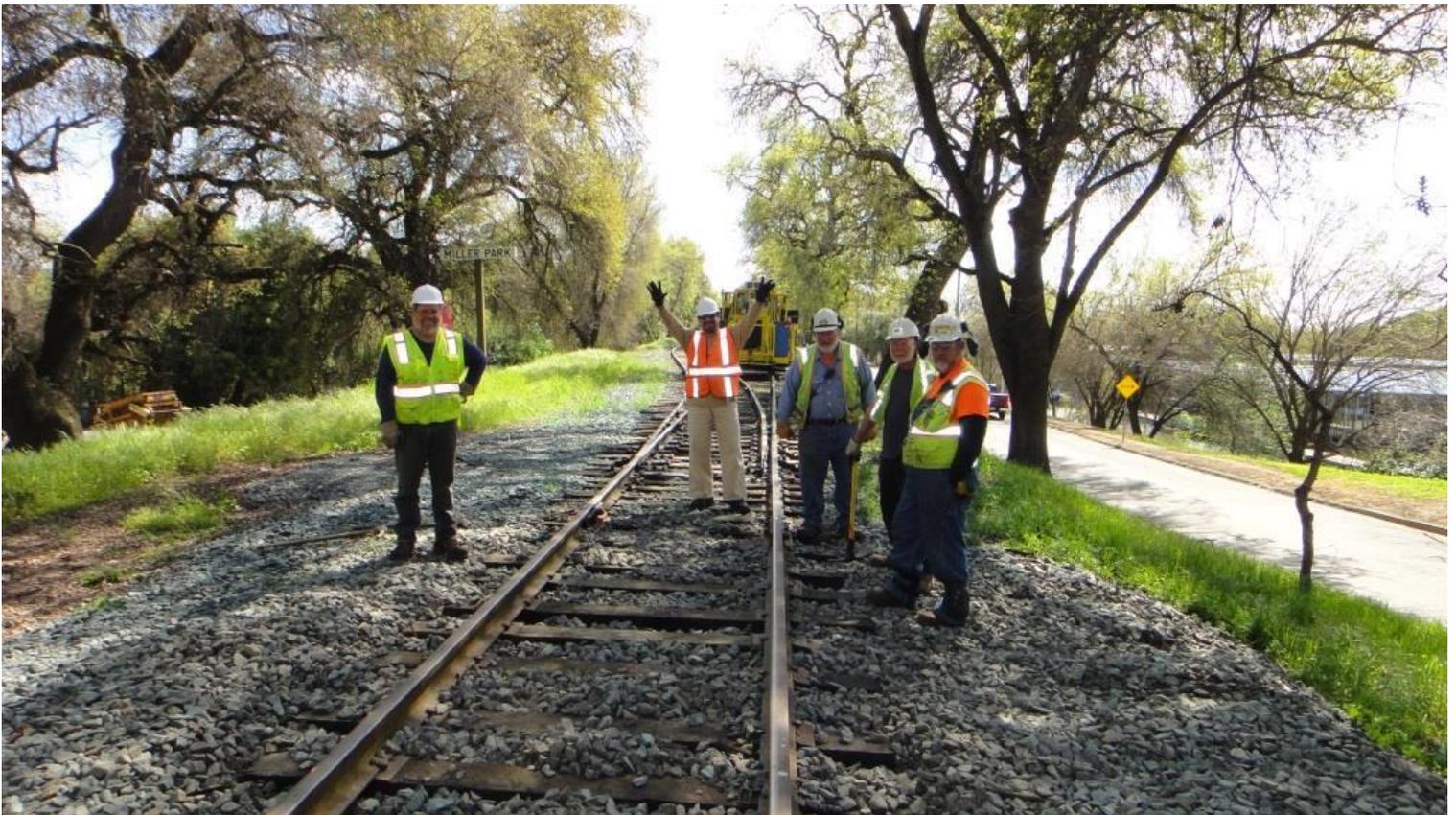
Emulating our spike-maul master, Steve Nemeth, Mike F. interprets old-fashion track-gang railroading by hand-driving spikes...



...And hits the nail (or spike) on the head every time!



Mike M. and Mike F. loosen some ballast so that the tamper can be used to shove a tie a few inches south



Jose declares victory as the Team completes principle construction on Front Street rail-replacement/upsizing project!



Heather and Mike F. run the tamper several times over the new track at maximum speed authorized under the rules



Day is done. Heather takes the tamper back to town