

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for May 10, 2015. It was a relatively quiet week by MOW standards. Yet, a major milestone was reached. After an absence of over four years from our line, the tie-shear returned to service this week and it sure did live up to its billing. So, enough with the previews of coming attractions. Let's get this update started.

The mighty Weed Team did not deploy on Tuesday. But, it will be back in action soon. In the Shops Tuesday, Frank Werry was EIC. He, Pat Scholzen, and Harry Voss proved their dedication by manning the fort while others were out of town making cameo appearances elsewhere. Pat and Frank worked through the afternoon to install a hitch on the back end of the A-5 motorcar. This is the motorcar that Frank and Mike Harris have restored to full operation as the primary head-end power for Interpretive Handcar Program. Then, they moved it to the west end of Bay 5 ready to deploy.

It's always a pleasure to welcome new members to the MOW Team. On Thursday, Joe Rivera, an experienced heavy-equipment operator, began his volunteer service with the CSRM. After the customary "welcome aboard" tour, Joe, Alan Hardy, and Frederick Carr spent the evening in the Erecting Shop installing the final bits on the tie-shear. Joe and Fred got the shroud over the shear's powerful diesel engine put together while Alan Mondrian commenced his latest artistic endeavor painting the tie-crane "MOW yellow."

Saturday was a day of great expectations for the maiden deployment of the tie-shear. This would be our "Granite Rock 10 moment." In 2011, the shear suffered a catastrophic breakdown out on the line. Now, after a complete rebuild of its hydraulic system, it was primed to return to service – and just in the nick of time. Currently the Team is engaged in the restoration of the Miller Park Siding. The plan is to bring the Siding up to Class 2 Track standards on which passenger trains can run. Once completed, trains will be diverted onto the Miller Park Siding while the MOW Team takes the Mainline out of service between Switch 14 (North Miller Park Siding) and Switch 16 (South Miller/Setzer Lead) to undertake some major repairs. Using the Jackson 125 tie exchanger on the Siding proved problematic. With the mainline adjacent just to the west and no shoulder to the east, the ability to pull out intact ties was limited. The tie-shear is the perfect machine for the location. It slices a tie in thirds, lifts out the center section, and then "kicks" the tie-ends out from under the rails.

As it was a special day, Chris Carlson and Harry provided two pink boxes of doughnuts. Joining Harry and Chris were Alan, Frank, Pam Tatro, Fred, Heather "Big Finger" Kearns, Michael Florentine, and Mike Miller. Heather was injured earlier in the week when her finger got caught in the handbrake of the El Dorado (not her fault). So, she would have a special job – keeping everyone "on point." Following doughnut hour, the big doors of Bay 5 were opened. Chris fired-up the shear and headed out onto the transfer table for its lateral move south. Conductor Frank toned-up Omaha and quickly got a green signal indication for the shear to cross over the UP Main. In Old Sacramento, the Team deployed the rest of the track equipment we'd need for a day of tie removal. On the Miller Park Siding, Chris moved the tie-shear over the first marked tie. The shears descended with a bang. They closed around the tie slicing it in three. Just as quickly, it lifted the center portion of the tie out of the ground and dropped it away from the crib. Then Chris positioned the kickers over the sliced tie which shoved the tie-ends out from under the rail. The Team was thrilled as the tie-shear was operating perfectly and exactly as designed. You can check out a video of that first tie being sliced to bits by clicking here: <https://vimeo.com/127385838>.

Throughout the day, the tie-shear was slicing ties faster than the Team could remove spikes and rail-anchors. Fred and Mike F. were rushing from tie to tie pulling spikes and popping off anchors. Frank and Mike M. removed the tie debris. Alan followed behind with scarifier digging the empty cribs out. Heather pointed. A few issues arose with the machine that required Harry's attention. Weeping hydraulic lines were tightened and the air system adjusted. It's still not quite right as it takes significant time to "pump-up." But these are issues that can be fixed. After all, the machine hasn't been used in nearly five years and, in the intervening time, underwent a major overhaul. By the end of the day, however, the shear sliced up a total of 41 ties.

In the late afternoon, the Team headed back to Old Sacramento with all its equipment. Because the scarifier won't trigger the signal system at Capitol Mall, Granite Rock 10 engineer Cheryl Meyer moved the locomotive into the circuit behind the scarifier to allow it to cross safely. Conductor Frank toned-up Omaha and sent Chris in the tie-shear over the double-diamonds back to the Shops where all the little issues will be addressed. Saturday's operation was an unmitigated success. The reintroduction of the tie-shear, coupled with the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger, has practically eliminated the back-breaking labor of tie removal. Our thanks go to Team Tie Shear Captain, Scott Morrison, a hydraulics expert, who coordinated the rebuild of the machine. Fred, Frank, Mike Harris, Chris, Alan, Heather, Harry, Pat, Gene Peck, Cliff Hayes, amongst others, worked tirelessly to bring this machine back on line. Most of all, thanks to the California State Railroad Museum Foundation for its faith in the MOW Team as evidenced by its financial support of this incredibly important project. It's hard to believe that, just six months ago, there were many who considered it worthless scrap and urged us to dispose of it. Fortunately, we didn't listen.

This coming week, the Team will gather as usual at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. On Saturday, we will begin the process of installing, plating, and spiking 41 new ties on the Miller Park Siding. Plating and spiking is the more challenging part of the operation so, it will be a busy day. Many thanks to everyone who helped make Saturday such a success!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Joe and Fred install the shroud on the tie-shear



With Chris in command, the tie-shear makes its maiden crossing over the double-diamond



Chris in the tie-shear slices through rotten ties on the Miller Park Siding



Inside the cab, Chris's nimble touch allows the shear to cut through ties like a hot knife through butter.



Uh-oh. What did you do, Chris? Heather deploys “big-finger” in an accusatory fashion...



The tie-shear makes tie bits manageable. Mike M. carries off a tie-end after the shear sliced it in three.



Harry makes an on-the-spot adjustment to the shear.



"Big finger" makes another appearance. Heather and Fred are trying to point something out...



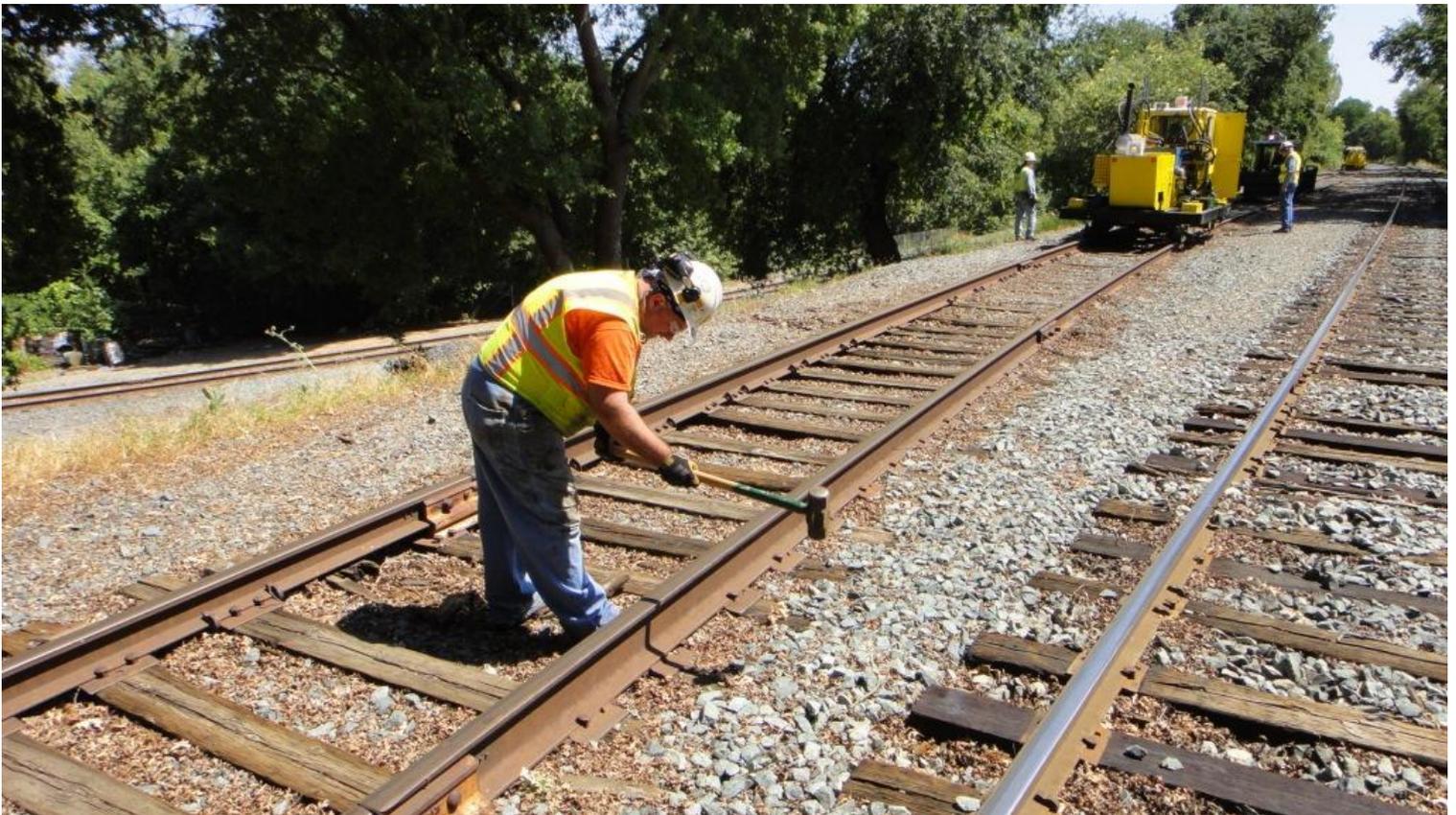
Frank directs Alan in the scarifier following behind the tie-shear to dig out the cribs



Mike F. and Fred pull spikes and pound out rail-anchors in anticipation of the tie-shear's arrival



Mike M. greets the Granite Rock 10 as it passes by the MOW Team's work limits on the Miller Park Siding



Mike F. pounds out rail-anchors around ties to be sliced by the shear



Mike M. stands by the shear as it “kicks” out a tie-end



Frank and Mike F. remove tie debris as Alan in the scarifier prepares to come in and dig out the crib