

Greetings!

This is your MOW Team update for June 28, 2015. You know what they say. Best laid plans and all that. Two steps forward, one step back. That sort of describes the week just concluded. So, let's not take any more steps back by delaying this update any further.

Things were well and good on Tuesday when Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Scott Morrison, Steve Nemeth, Frank Werry, Joe Rivera, Gene Peck, Heather Kearns, and Alan Hardy brought the Erecting Shop to life. The Nordberg Super "B" Spiker drew everyone's attention as the Team poured over it to find its foibles and get them fixed. Lots of progress was made. Steve, who is a Saturday regular, decided that once a week just isn't enough MOW Team fun. So, he's added Tuesday to his schedule. Good thing, too, because he was able to locate and repair two solenoid actuators that were not actuating. Alan started the wiring for new lights and a horn. Over at the new-old tamper, Frank and Scott pulled the floor panels to access the hydraulic drive motor. When traveling down the line, it just doesn't seem to have any "umph." Scott, our hydraulic expert, will take care of that problem. As work continued, one observed that the new-old tamper may be low on hydraulic fluid. So, Steve, Joe, and Frank brought in a 55 gallon drum and filled it up. It was a good evening with good progress and good fun.

By Thursday, the heat was on. It was 106 degrees at 5 o'clock outside Erecting Shop, and not exactly Polar Express conditions inside. But, Frank and Heather decided to brave the heat to see if any more progress could be made on the Super B. They worked on the electrical system for a while. But, by 7 o'clock, they were just about fully cooked and decided to call it an early evening. A wise move, indeed.

Saturday started just as the sun was peaking over the horizon. In the Shops, Alan got things opened up and the transfer table in position so we could deploy the new-old tamper and formerly-pink ballast regulator (nicknamed the *USS Sea Tiger*) all before the arrival of doughnuts. Thanks to Harry Voss and Chris Carlson, two pink boxes would welcome Pam Tatro, Clem Meier, Ed Moriarty, Mike Willis, Taka Blackburn, Mike Taylor, Frank, and Heather. Another Miller Park adventure beckoned where the plan was to get the remaining 40 ties spiked while Alan in the tamper and Chris in the regulator would begin leveling the track. Conductor Frank entered into negotiations with the UP dispatcher in Omaha for the successful transit of the big machines over the double-diamonds and out onto the line. At Miller Park, the spiking team started at the south end of the line while the leveling team worked at the north end. Setting spikes was the first order of business. Clem, Pam, Ed, Heather, Mike W., Taka, and Mike T. hammered them in part way by hand for the pneumatic spikers to drive the rest of the way. Frank got the motorcar and air compressor into position then set up the Nolan Track Cart with its spiker rack to carry the 60 pound hammers. Once the spikes were set, Mike W. and Ed took the spikers in hand and began driving them down. Taka and Clem managed the air hoses while Frank kept the operation moving with the motorcar. Mike T. used a lining bar to straighten bent spikes and, at times, reverted to the old-fashioned method of using a spike maul to drive them by hand.

Meanwhile, the Alan and Chris were working away in the tamper and regulator on leveling the track. The regulator was filling in all the holes with smooth ballast. The official ballast regulator observers, Bob Ress and Bill Meyer, arrived on site to officially observe the regulator doing work on our line for the first time. Indeed, things were going very well. That's when the step backwards occurred. The tamper, while jacking-up the west rail to make it level with the east, suffered a bit of a catastrophe. As the work-head plunged into the ground to squeeze rock under the tie to support the new level, a loud "bang" was heard and the tamper shuttered. At that moment, four steel bolts holding one of the work heads on the machine sheared-off dropping it the ground. This ended the leveling operation and left the west rail suspended about an inch above the ties for about 30 feet. Not good. So, Harry headed back to the Shops to see if proper replacement bolts could be found. Alas, none were available. The good news is that, once the tamper is repaired, the track issue will be fixed rather easily and leveling can continue. But, it's another unexpected delay in getting the Mainline back into service.

Heather and Clem stayed on site during lunch to load dead tie debris onto a flat car to be deposited down at Setzer. Of course, once the rest of the Team returned from lunch and saw what fun Clem and Heather were having, they were envious and anxious to join the tie debris disposal party. Now the line is clear of dead tie material. Two more ties needed to be inserted (their cribs got buried by accident and were missed). So Heather ran the scarifier and Chris guided their installation. With that, principal re-construction is done. Now, we're down to finishing the leveling and surfacing of the track and taking care of a few alignment issues. The Team's efforts will pay off with a safer, more stable track for all our volunteers and passengers.

Once again this week, our thanks go to Dale Parker and Paul Helman of the Signal Department who were on site manning the crossing gates at Front Street. Signal's support has been critical to this operation. Many thanks to Dale, Paul, and all of Team Signals for their help!

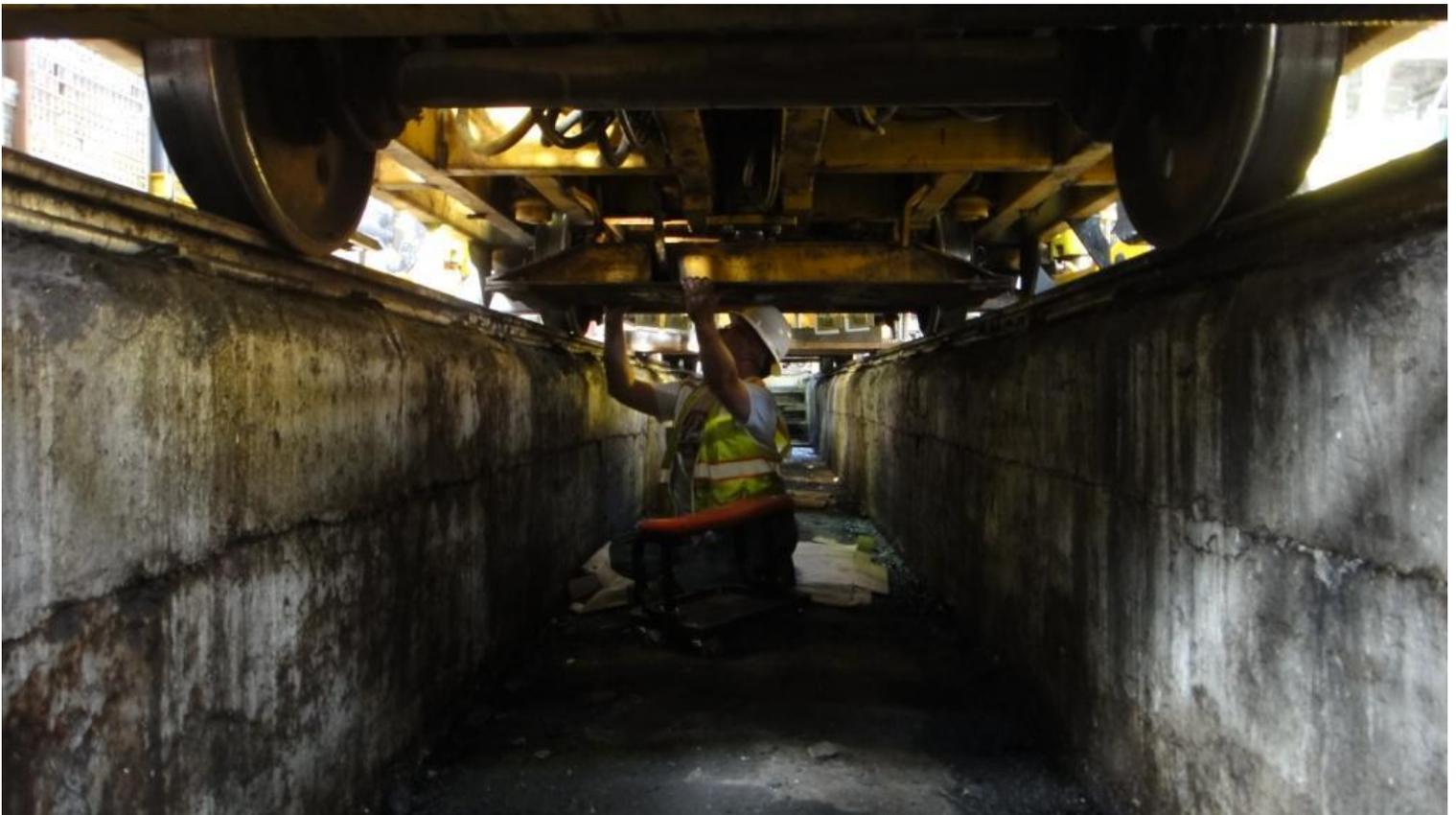
This coming week, temperatures on Tuesday are expected to crest 105 degrees. So, the Weed Team will head out on the line at an extra-early hour in an effort to beat the heat. Meet at the Shops at 7 o'clock a.m. In the afternoon and evening, the Shops will be open and accepting volunteers. We'll see how long it takes for us to cook. Thursday evening looks a bit more hospitable at a predicted 96 degrees. Saturday is Independence Day but the MOW Team will be at work. Meet in the Shops at 8 o'clock a.m. for red, white, and blue doughnuts – well, doughnuts nonetheless. Many thanks to all the volunteers from the different departments of the Railroad who have worked with us make this project come together. It's been a great collaborative effort to build a better track for all.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Steve meanders through a maze of hydraulic hoses while working on the Super B spiker



Scott in the pit under the new-old tamper to try to figure out why it has no "umph" in second gear



Steve fills the new-old tamper's hydraulic tank while Frank pumps hydraulic fluid and Joe checks the gauge



The new-old tamper and the formerly pink ballast regulator – a.k.a. "USS Sea Tiger" – crosses over the UP Main



Setting spike is the first priority. Mike W., Pam, Ed, Heath, and Taka set spikes



Mike T. uses a lining bar to straighten a wayward spike



Pam loads tie debris on the flatcar. This molehill will become a mountain...



Mike W. spikes with the pneumatic spiker while Ed nips the rail



Taka re-sets a spike that popped out of place while Ed stands ready to drive it into the tie



Mike T. nips the tie while Ed spikes



When all else fails, Mike T. reverts to the old fashioned way



Waiting in our safe place for the first train to pass by our work limits. From left: Heather, Bill, Mike W. Clem, Frank, Bob, Chris, Mike T., Taka, Ed, Pam, and Alan (being silly)...



One tie on the siding required plating and spiking. Mike T. nips while Frank spikes



Once a Weedie, always a Weedie. As a core member of the Weed Team, Heather, can't help but pull green thingies out of the ground



At lunch, Clem and Heather build the mountain of dead tie material on the flatcar



Down at Setzer, Heather and Clem deposit dead tie debris in the dead tie pile



After lunch, the rest of the Team was anxious to join the dead tie debris fun...



Like a volcano, the dead-tie mountain at Setzer grows...



The Granite Rock 10 passes the new-old tamper on the 3 o'clock run



One final duty. Chris guides a new tie into position while Heather manages the scarifier-inserter