Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for August 16, 2015. It was a “rock-and-roll” week for your MOW Team as we rolled quite a bit of rock around the line. So, before we rock around the line too much, let’s get this update rolling…

The Mighty Weed Team reconvened on Tuesday following their summer recess. Mike Taylor, Frank Squire, and Heather Kearns headed to Hood for some fun with the DR field-and-brush mowers around the container area. Also, they took on the evil star-thistle empire which has occupied so much of the line. The container area at Hood is now quite presentable thanks to Heather and Frank S. who removed the tangle of dead weeds and such so common at this time of year. Then they headed down the line on star-thistle patrol. The Weedies were quite successful and returned to the Shops with two large bags of the nasty stuff. Indeed, it was a good day all around.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Alan Hardy, Scott Morrison, Frank Werry, Frederick Carr, Mike Harris, Frank S., and Heather picked right up where they left off last week. Mike H. installed the new solenoid on the Super B spiker that controls the releasing of the brakes. It worked! No longer is it necessary for someone to ride on the roof and manually operate the brake release. Fred and Frank S. took on installation of the multi-functional hydraulic valve in the tamper. We hope to have it up and running ASAP. Heather and Frank W. headed over to Old Sacramento with a couple 55 gallon drums of diesel to fuel the machines. All in all, a very productive evening.

Thursday, Alan, Heather, Fred, Dave Megeath, Frank S., and Mike H. headed over to Old Sacramento to shuffle all of the equipment and make sure it would not be in view of the cameras for the broadcast of the Channel 31 “Good Morning Program” originating live from the Museum Friday morning. Dave and Heather brought the man-lift and chipper over from the Shops and spotted them on the Center Siding. The ballast hoppers were moved out of the way by taking them to Setzer and chaining them to the track. Since Saturday’s plan included their use, Mike H. took the front-end loader down to Setzer where he filled them with rock. Mike H. is quite the expert operator. Check out the video of Mike’s precision ballast loading in progress: https://vimeo.com/136270749. Back in Old Sac., Frank S., Dave, Heather, Alan, and Fred managed to rearrange the remaining equipment and squeeze them out of view. The tie-shear needed a few repairs and adjustments so, it was taken back to the Shops. Conductor Heather contacted Omaha and in no time, Dave, at the controls, got the green light. It took a little more time than anticipated but, everything ended up being in the proper position for easy deployment on Saturday.

Doughnuts were on site by 7:30 a.m. Saturday morning preventing any threat of doughnut-disruption when Clem Meier, Mike Willis, Heather, Steve Nemeth, Frank W., Fred, Frank S., Michael Florentine, and Alan arrived. The plan for the day was to move a lot of rock. First, the Team would add a top-layer of fine-rock where the brakemen step off the train at Switch 17, the north switch at Baths. Also, we’d begin ballasting the track between Mile Posts 2.5 and 2.8 in the area where the west rail is low. For the brakemen’s landing area, Frank W. took charge of the front-end loader and scooped up several buckets-full of fine-rock which he placed in the one-ton truck with the dump-bed. Steve then took the truck to Baths where the rock was transferred back to the loader’s bucket. The loader then would cross over the rails where rock was laid. Steve, Mike F., and Clem used ballast forks and shovels to spread it and make an even surface. Meanwhile, down at Setzer, Fred, Frank S., Mike W., Alan, and Heather attempted to change-out a bad-ordered wheel on one of the hoppers. Unfortunately, the bolts were so tight that the extension on the ratchet actually broke while trying to loosen them. It was slightly “over-torqued.” Nonetheless, three of the four hoppers were loaded with about 10 tons ballast and hauled up the hill with ease by the Kalamazoo tug. On site, Alan, Mike W., and Frank S. strategically released the rock along both sides of the west rail. After all three hoppers were discharged, the Team headed south to help spread fine-rock near Switch 17. The loader made several trips over the tracks. With the north switch project done, the Team headed to the south switch where the remaining fine-rock was placed in an area to the west of the track. When the locomotive faces south, this is where the brakeman steps off during the run-around. The whole Team participated and had that area up to snuff in no time.

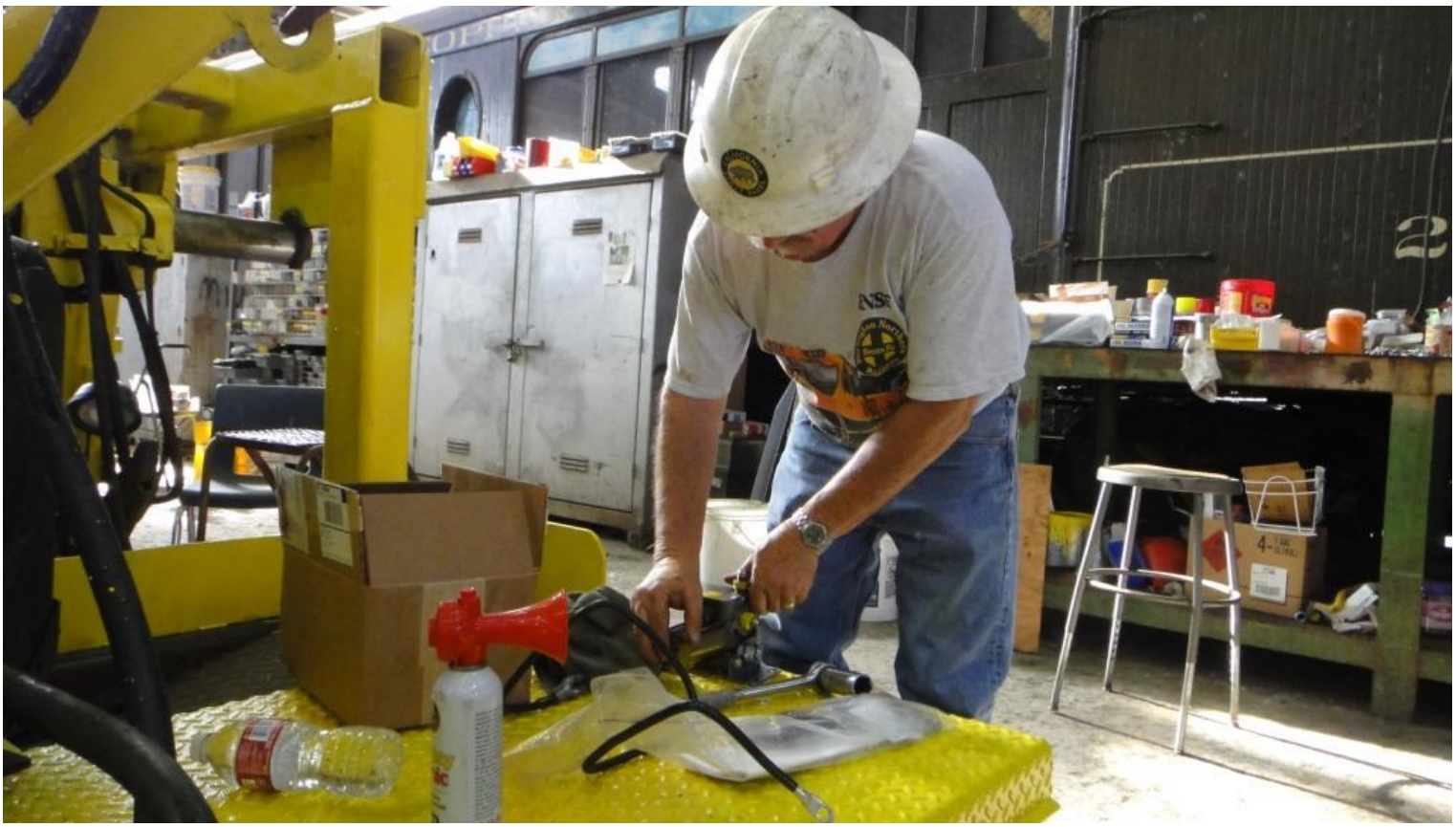
Then the Team focused its attention on the frog at Switch 20. Concerns have been expressed about the Granite Rock 10’s wheels impacting on the point of the frog. Using multiple measuring devices, we tried to find what might be forcing the 10’s wheel flanges into the point. Guard-face, guard-check, gauge, the approaches into and out of the frog were analyzed. We sought evidence of the frog moving under load. Mike F. even tried to rattle the bolts in the frog with a sledge hammer. Yet, we still can’t find the culprit. All of our readings indicated that the frog actually exceeds standards for Class 4 track. We’re Class 2. So the Team repositioned and tightened the gauge-rods that we installed a month or so ago between the guard rail and frog to make sure that the two were not moving independently of each other. Perhaps this will help mitigate the situation. Clearly, we‘re going to be keeping an eye on this area. We really want to solve this problem.

In the afternoon, another load of ballast would be dumped near MP 2.6. Steve ran the loader and loaded another 10 tons of rock. Mike W. and Frank S., working in what seems to be a fog, disgorged it from the hoppers. As this point, the witching-hour was upon us. Quite pleased with our accomplishments, we packed up and headed back to town.

On Tuesday this week, the Weed Team will work on equipment in the Shops. Meet at 9 o’clock a.m. For the evening crews on Tuesday and Thursday, the Shops will be open at or before 5 o’clock. Saturday, 8 o’clock a.m. is the call time. If the tamper is back in service, we’ll start jacking the west rail at MP 2.5. Many thanks to everyone who gives their time and talents to keeping the MOW Team rolling!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard



Mike H. adjusts the new solenoid for that engages the brakes on the Super B spiker

Fred makes adjustments to the multi-functional hydraulic valve on the tamper

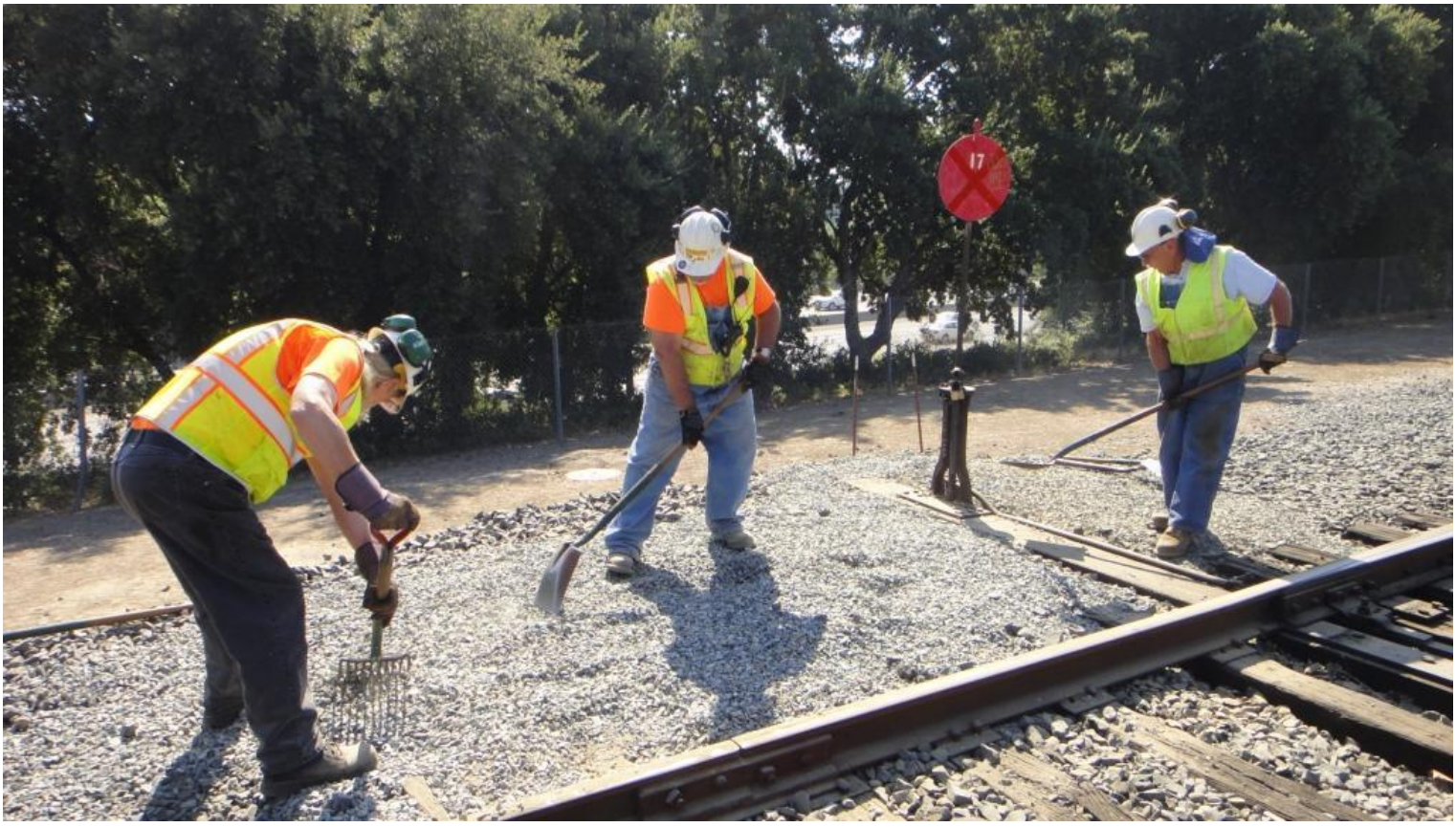
After Mike H. installed the new solenoid on the Super B, the brakes release on command and no long require manual override

Dave pilots the tie-shear over the UP Main

Heather looking super-cool operating the diesel pump

Frank W. filling the tie-crane's diesel tank

Mike H. operating the loader engaged in precision hopper-loading

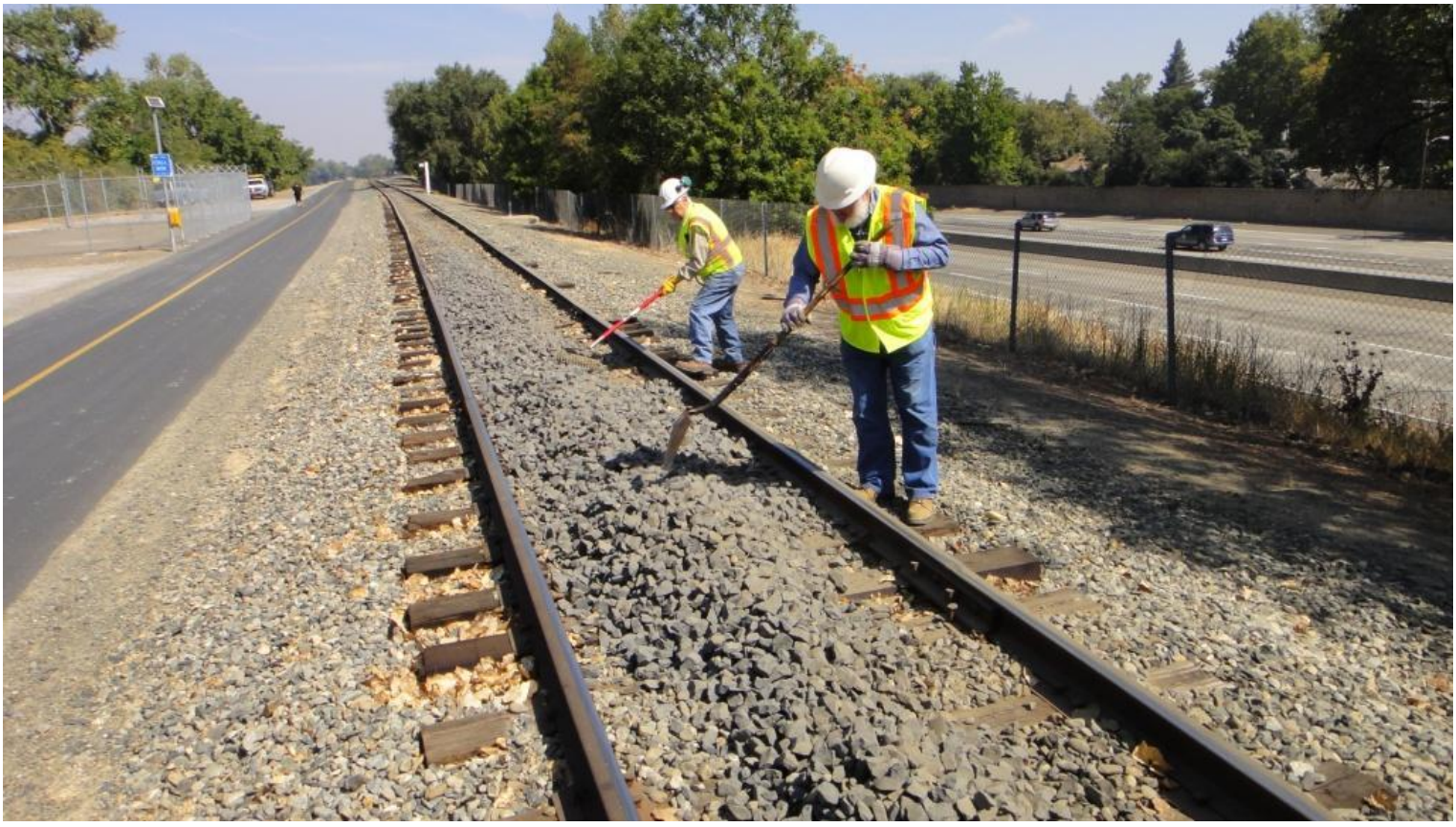


Fred, Mike F., and Clem spread fine rock around the switch stand at Switch 17

Frank in the loader receives a load of fine rock from one-ton with the dump-bed

Mike F. shovels fine rock into the loader’s bucket

Alan, Mike W., and Frank S. drop rock along the west rail near Mile Post 2.5



Mike W. and Frank S. spread the rock between the rails

Frank W. in the loader brings in more rock to lay on the brakemen's landing strip at Switch 17

Near Switch 20, Frank W. and Mike F. level the area where brakemen step off the locomotive when it is facing south

All hands on deck: Clem, Heather, Mike W., Frank W., Frank S., and Mike F. make for a smooth landing for the brakemen at Switch 20

Alan and Fred reposition the gauge-rods between the frog and guard-rail at Switch 20

Roll-call: one by one, each member of the Team independently verifies the measurements

Mike F. uses the sledge hammer to shake-up the frog a bit

Steve scoops up a bucket-full of rock…

…And skillfully places it in the ballast hopper car…

…Which Mike W. and Frank S. lay out along the west rail near Mile Post 2.65

Frank working in a fog drops rock between the rails with the center-dump hopper (which, by the way, was built by Cliff Hayes)