

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for April 17, 2016. The MOW Team took its show on the road this week with an adventure down on the Hood Line to replace a switch head-block. So, let's keep the adventure rolling by getting this update started right away.

On Tuesday, Heather Kearns, Pat Scholzen, Frederick Carr, Anthony Filamor, Cliff Hayes, Gene Peck, Mike Harris, and Harry Voss began gathering all the bits a pieces we'd need for our field-trip to Hood, on Saturday. Like in Old Sacramento, the MOW Team has a container at Hood where a motorcar and other on-track equipment are stored primarily for use by the Weed Team. The head-block at switch leading from the Hood Mainline to the Container Track is completely rotten – to the point where the switch-stand is falling over. A "head-block" is an extra-hefty, 15-foot long tie which supports the switch-points, the adjacent stock rails, and switch-stand used for aligning the switch. Fortunately, we have a couple spare head-blocks that, although removed from other switches on the SSRR Mainline, are still in adequate condition for use on the Hood Line. So, Heather and Anthony hitched-up the white trailer to the trusty Chevy Truck while Mike H. fired-up the Big Green Machine and all headed to Setzer to retrieve a spare head-block. Mike H. scooped it up with Big Green and set it on the trailer where it was strapped-down. Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Cliff finished installing the bell-bracket for the A-6 motorcar. Fred, Gene, and Pat got the bell in place and wired it up. So, the melodic tones of the A-6's bell were reverberating through the building. Cliff moved on to his next project of rebuilding the battery box on the Kalamazoo which had been mangled when thieves attempted to steal the battery. Then, he built a new step for climbing into the machine. Clearly, it was an evening of good clean progress!

Thursday, Mike H., Heather, Anthony, and Cliff picked-up right where they left off on Tuesday. Mike H. took the yellow forklift over to the Boiler Shop to unbury the section-gang machine and, with Heather's and Anthony's help load it onto our trusty Chevy Truck. Next, Mike H. got the tool caddie loaded into the Truck 14 (which we've borrowed for a couple days). While we're at Hood on Saturday, the plan is to take on a couple other track maintenance issues including installing a few gauge-rods. Mike H. found six good ones and got them in the truck. Over in the Erecting Shop, Anthony painted the new step on the deck of the Kalamazoo while Cliff was making another step for the other side. Then, Cliff and Anthony adjusted the brakes of the A-6 motorcar which had gotten a bit out of whack.

The Realm of the Pink Box welcomed its newest devote on Saturday morning. Ed Kottal, a graduate from the recent docent class, is the newest member of the MOW Team. There to welcome Ed to the Team were Pamela Tatro, Anthony, Clem Meier, Steve Nemeth, Heather, Frank Werry, Jose Gomez, Mike Taylor, and Michael Florentine. With everything packed and ready to go, the Team hitched the trailer up to the truck and headed to Hood. Once on site, Heather, Mike T., and Anthony pulled the spikes on the head-block at the gauge-plate, keepers, and switch stand. Pam and Clem clamped the switch-point to the stock-rail. Mike F., Frank, Steve, and Clem deployed the section-gang machine. After a bit of cajoling, Jose got the machine started. Frank, at the controls, grabbed the old head-block and, inch by inch, slid it out from under the rails. Anthony, Steve, Mike F., and Jose used timber-tongs to move the old head-block out of the way. Then, Jose, Frank, Mike F., Frank, and Ed transferred the new-ish head-block from the trailer to the truck where it was taken to the switch for installation. The Team positioned the head-block as Frank brought in the section-gang machine to pull it under the rails. The replacement went very smoothly thanks to Mike F. who was the "idea-man" for the day. He came up with a solution to nearly every logistical problem we faced. Next, was the tricky part – lining the switch-stand up properly so that all the switch components function as they should. The initial placement had to be modified. Ed pulled the spikes on the initial setting. Frank, Jose, Heather, and Steve repositioned the stand and spiked it down. Then, Steve and Mike F. put on quite a show interpreting old fashion section-gang railroading with a synchronized spike-driving demonstration while spiking-down the gauge-plate. Who needs a pneumatic spike-drive when you've got Mike F. and Steve?

After lunch, the Team headed north to Mile Post 11.1 where a section of the 30-foot section of track was floating over the ties and needed stabilization. We'd install Gauge-rods to help hold the track in position. Ed, Steve, Mike T., Mike F., Jose, Heather, and Anthony chiseled-out the rock and dirt under the base of the rails put the rods in place. They gauged the track and tightened-down the clamps. Next, the Team headed about a mile further north to build a rail-stop just to the south the fourth trestle. The track leading up to the trestle is not properly supported so the Team used ties to set up a block to prevent any track-mounted machine from approaching the trestle from the south. Meanwhile, back at the container end of the track, Frank managed to pack-up the tools and equipment and got the section-gang machine loaded onto the truck. The Hood motorcar and trailer was stowed in Hood container. With that, we headed back to the Shops in Sacramento after a very successful, interesting and fun day on the beautiful Hood Line.

Ramsay Harris at the All Aboard Desk has issued the latest list of hour-bar recipients. The Weed Team's Jeff Allen has 5,000 hours and our own Designated Supervisor of Barbecue Engineers, Pat Scholzen, has 6,000 hours! Congratulations to Jeff and Pat and thank you for unwavering dedication to building a better railroad!

This coming week, the Shops Team will gather as usual at or before 5 o'clock on Tuesday and Thursday. The Weed Team will resume weed work on Thursday and plan to travel south of the I-5 bridge to continue tree pruning. Saturday The MOW Team will commence a new adventure out on the SSRR Mainline. The MOW Team had a good week which was only possible thanks to the incredible dedication of the volunteers. Yes, your MOW Team is keeping the dream of trains running at Hood alive. Many thanks, indeed!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.





Cliff welds a new step onto the deck of the Kalamazoo



Mike H. grabs the spare head-blocks down at the Setzer Yard...





...And loads them onto the trailer



Anthony on the forklift gives the trailer a bit of a lift to relieve the presser on the hitch-latch so that Heather can remove it





Anthony paints the new step on the Kalamazoo



Cliff uses a grinder on the welds of the new step he just made for the other side of the Kalamazoo





Frank and Clem deploy the section-gang machine



Heather uses the field-and-brush mower to mow field-and-brush





Clem and Pam tighten-down a clamp on the switch-points



Frank operates the section-gang machine and pulls the old rotten head-block out from under the track





Anthony, Mike F., and Jose move the old head-block out of the way



Frank, Jose, Mike F., Steve, Ed, and Heather bring in the new-ish head-block





Ed and Mike F. roll the new head-block towards the switch



Anthony, Jose, Mike T., and Mike F. move the new head-block into position





Mike F., and Mike T. line up the new head-block for insertion



Because a head-block is much heavier than a tie, the section-gang machine had a bit of trouble letting-go after each pull. The clamps just weren't opening wide enough. So, Jose gives the pulling-ram a bit of a shimmy-shake to get it to release its hold on the head-block





With the new head-block in position, it was time to get the gauge-plate in place. Clem, Mike F., and Steve work it onto the head-block as Anthony nips-up the rail so it can be slid underneath



The gauge-plate was being a bit stubborn so, Clem uses the “ka-banger” tool to gives it a “ka-bang” into position





Notice how nicely Maintenance of Way folks blend in with the environment



Anthony spikes down the gauge-bracket as Ed nips-up the head-block





With the switch-stand now tacked-down, Mike T. tests it to check its position and make sure it's aligned properly



You can take the weeds out of Mike T. but, you can't take Mike T. out of the weeds...





Ed pulls a spike on the switch-stand in order for it to be shifted slightly counter-clockwise



With everything now lined-up perfectly, Steve drives the final spike on the switch-stand



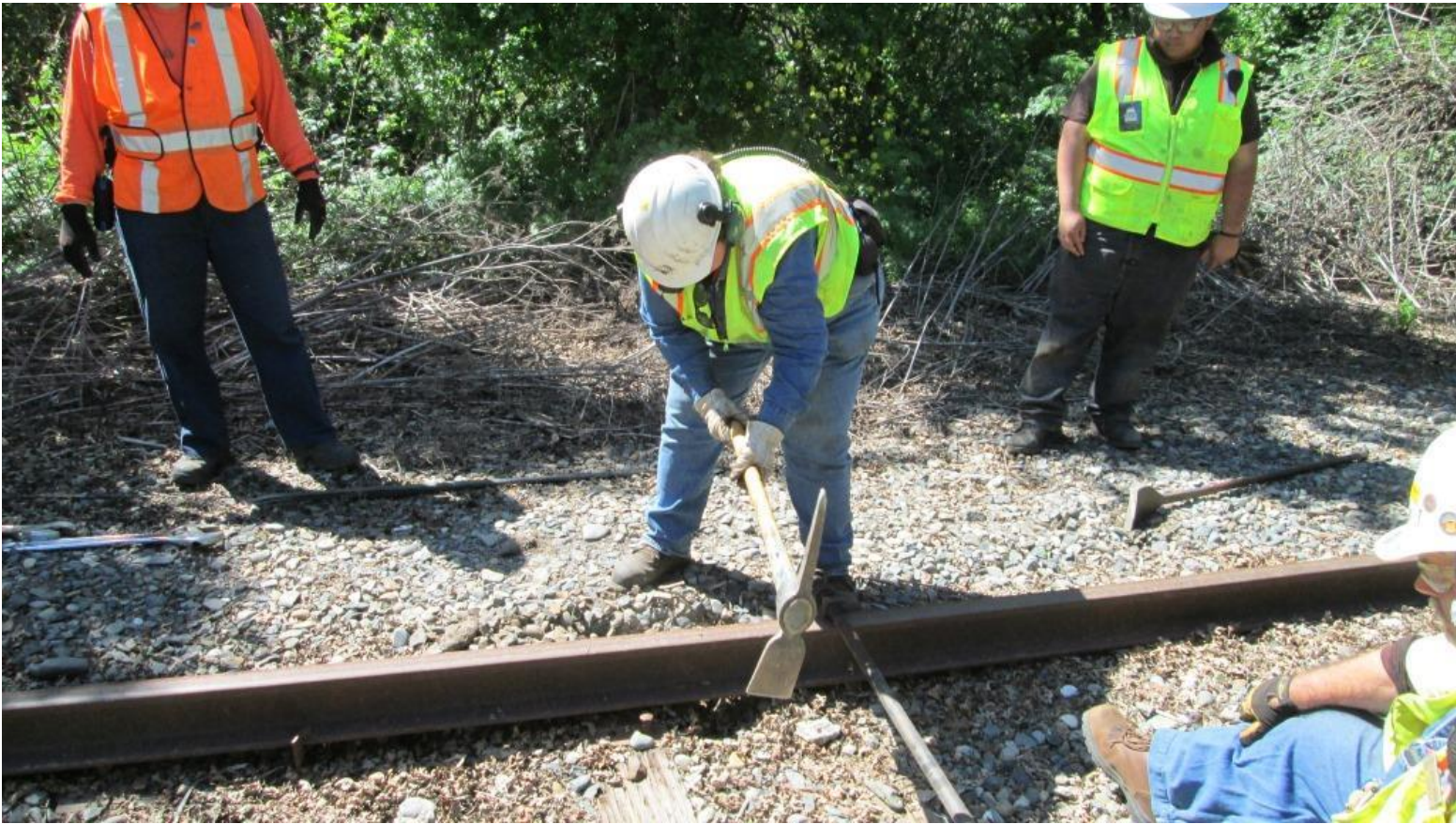


Now, Steve and Mike F. put on a show. They interpret old-fashion section-gang railroading by demonstrating tandem spike-driving

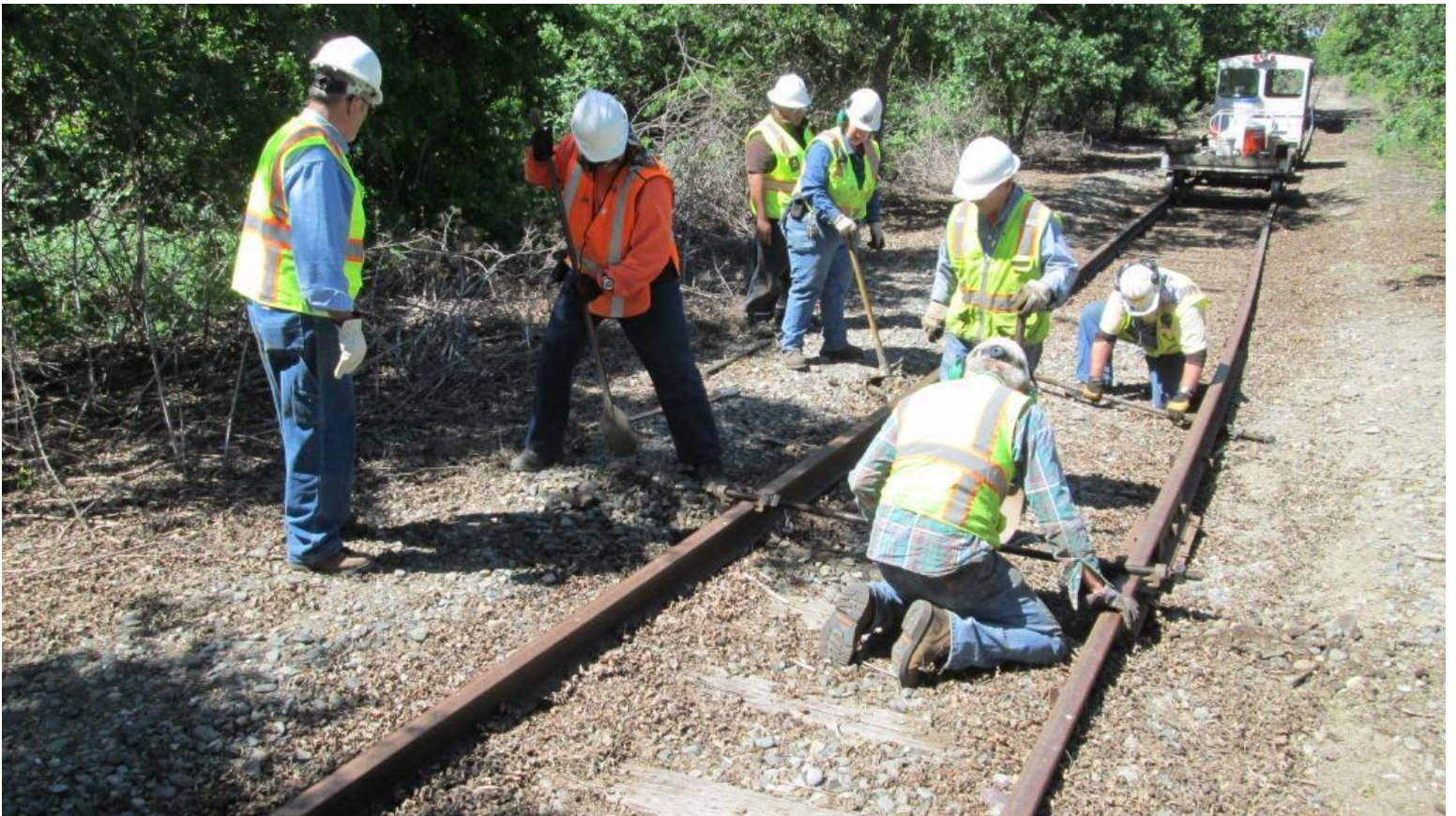


Steve and Mike F. put on an incredible show. In fact, they were so impressive that one would think they drove spikes for a living. Of course, Steve has been featured on the History Channel for his windmill spike-driving technique





Meanwhile, up at Mile Post 11.1, Heather digs-out under the rail so that a gauge-rod could be installed



The gauge-rods are placed in positions for restoring the proper gauge to the track...





...And the clamps are tightened-down to push the rails apart



At the south approach to the fourth trestle, Mike F. digs under the rail to build a rail-stop





The Team brings in two ties to use as a rail-stop



Victory on the Hood Line! Mike F., Steve, Anthony, Jose, Ed, Mike T., and Heather