

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for August 27, 2017. Wow! The final weekend of August has come and gone. This year is really flying fast. So, let's get this update started before we find ourselves in the middle of Polar Express (which begins in just 91 days...).

Pat Scholzen, Alan Hardy, Weston Snyder, Kyle Blackburn, Matt McCracken, Joe Margucci, Mike Harris, Frank Werry, Heather Kearns, and Gene Peck were all poised to accomplish great things on Tuesday. Frank, Gene, Pat, Mike H., and Alan got to work on the rail-mounted air-compressor. Getting it running is a major priority because, without an air-source on the Sutterville Line track to the Zoo, everything has to be spiked by hand. Mike H., Pat, Alan, and Gene managed to get the new engine mounts installed which re-leveled the engine. The fan was no longer catching on the shroud. This was thought to be a cause of it overheating. Gene attempted to start it. After several fits and spurts, the engine engaged but soon experienced the same problem it had before leading to another emergency shut-down. Speculation now is that the governor is malfunctioning or the fuel-pump is stuck wide open. More work to be done. In the meantime, we'd need to come up with a "Plan B" for getting an air-source down the line. Kyle, our apprentice welder, arrived early and worked with Alan on building two more rail-spreaders. Additional spreaders should help speed things up. Weston and Joe worked on getting the new tachometer on the man-lift installed. A wiring differential between the new tach and the machine has cast a wrinkle in this project. But, they're figuring it out. Matt did some grinding work on the final window shield for the ballast regulator. Heather led a team of Matt, Kyle, and Weston over to Old Sacramento to install the re-generated battery in the tie-shear. Kyle and Weston carried the weighty power source up the hill which Heather hooked-up. With one click of the starter, the machine roared to life. At least something is working. There's no doubt: Tuesday's effort was tremendous.

The general plan for Alan, Joe, Frank, Mike H., Gene, and Heather on Thursday was to move a bunch of equipment around to get a couple of flatcars into the Erecting Shop onto which the tire-mounted air-compressor could be loaded. With all the ballast-regulator's window shields now complete, it could move to Old Sac. The two flatcars that were spotted on the North Turntable Lead were hooked up to the Kalamazoo tug for the journey over to the Shops. In order to make room on the old 150 Track for the extra-large regulator, the scarifier-inserter and Jackson 125 tie-exchanger needed to move from the 150 Track to the North Turntable Lead. The ballast-regulator would then be spotted and locked-down on the 150 Track. All these tasks were accomplished with great aplomb. Alan, Joe, Heather, Frank, and Mike H. loaded the vast quantity of shields onto the deck of the regulator. Joe piloted the regulator out of the building onto the transfer table. Conductor Frank toned-up the Union Pacific dispatcher in Omaha and managed to secure a green signal indication. In Old Sac., Mike H. got the Kalamazoo going and Frank handled the 125. This Team has become extremely well adept at yard-moves and had the machine shuffle complete in no time. In fact, the most challenging aspect of the operation was figuring out proper arrangement of the multitude of window shields for the regulator. Back at the Shops, Alan carried the tire-mounted compressor from the Boiler Shop to the Erecting Shop with the yellow forklift. Joe and Frank positioned the Kalamazoo on the transfer table so that Alan could place the compressor on the flatcar. With just inches of deck space to spare, the compressor's hitch-end was supported by cribbing and then chained-down. This was a slightly complicated process of getting the thing positioned, cribbing built, and chained down but, it got done by "Quittin' time USA," which was called shortly after moving it into the building.

It was a nice, temperate, week so, what seems to be the pattern this year, Saturday turned into an oven. Luckily, Chris Carlson brought a big pink box filled with fresh fried-dough sugary goodness for Alan, Joe, Clem Meier, Kyle, Mike Miller, Bev Ratzlaff, Mary DiPietro, Bill Hastings, Michael Florentine, and Heather. More work on the Sutterville Line was the plan. Thanks to the air-compressor being loaded onto a flatcar, the Team wouldn't have to spike everything by hand. Chris climbed in the Kalamazoo and pulled the compressor over the UP Main. In Old Sacramento, the rest of the Team had the motorcar work-train consist ready to hook up to the Kalamazoo and compressor for the ride down the line to areas south of Mile Post 3.10. The new rail-spreaders that Kyle made really helped speed things up as Clem, Bill, Mike M., and Joe pulled spikes. Mary and Alan got the rail-spreaders in place and pulled on the big crescent-wrench which forced the rails apart. In some areas, the track was an inch out of gauge. Bev, Joe, Clem, Mike F., and Heather used tie-plugs to plug the old spike-holes. As the rails were spread apart and into proper gauge, Mike M., Joe, and Clem set spikes. Chris in the Kalamazoo slowly shoved the compressor into position for the pneumatic spike-driver to be deployed. But first, Mike F. needed to make sure he wasn't out of practice spiking the old-fashioned way. So, after driving a couple spikes by hand, it was clear that his skills were well refined. He then grabbed the pneumatic spike-driver and, as Mike M. nipped-up the ties, Mike F. drove them home. Mike M. then took the reins of the air-powered spiker and pounded a few more into the ties. As the rail was spiked, the spreaders would hopscotch up the line. Bill, Clem, and Kyle kept on pulling spikes, Bev, Heather, and Joe plugged old spike holes. Mary, Kyle, and Alan would place the spreaders and push the rails apart. Mike F., Mike M., and Kyle would spike with the pneumatic spiker. By 11:30, however, it was already 96 degrees. So, the Team agreed to keep working through their regular lunch break to take advantage of the relatively cool temperature. However, by 1 o'clock, it had hit the century mark. So, the EIC made the unpopular decision to end the operation and head back into town. First, the Team needed to run the Kalamazoo around the compressor so it could be pulled rather than shoved. This took time so, Mike F. piloting the motorcar consist and Chris in the Kalamazoo ducked-in at Miller Park so the train could pass without incident. Back in town, the motorcar consist was put away and the Team headed to lunch. Following lunch, the air-compressor was pulled to the Shops and put away. With it now 104 degrees, the Team called it a day. Although earlier than usual, the Team got a tremendous amount accomplished. What an extraordinary Team of volunteers to undertake such hard labor in such conditions. They are an inspiration!

This coming week, the MOW Team has more MOW fun planned for Tuesday and Thursday starting at or before 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday, the fun commences promptly at 8 o'clock a.m. The Team did fantastic work again, this week building a better railroad. Many thanks to one and all.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Matt grinds the edges of the final window shield for the ballast regulator



With the new engine mounts now installed in the air-compressor, Mike H. gets ready to fire it up





Joe and Weston installing the new tachometer in the man-lift

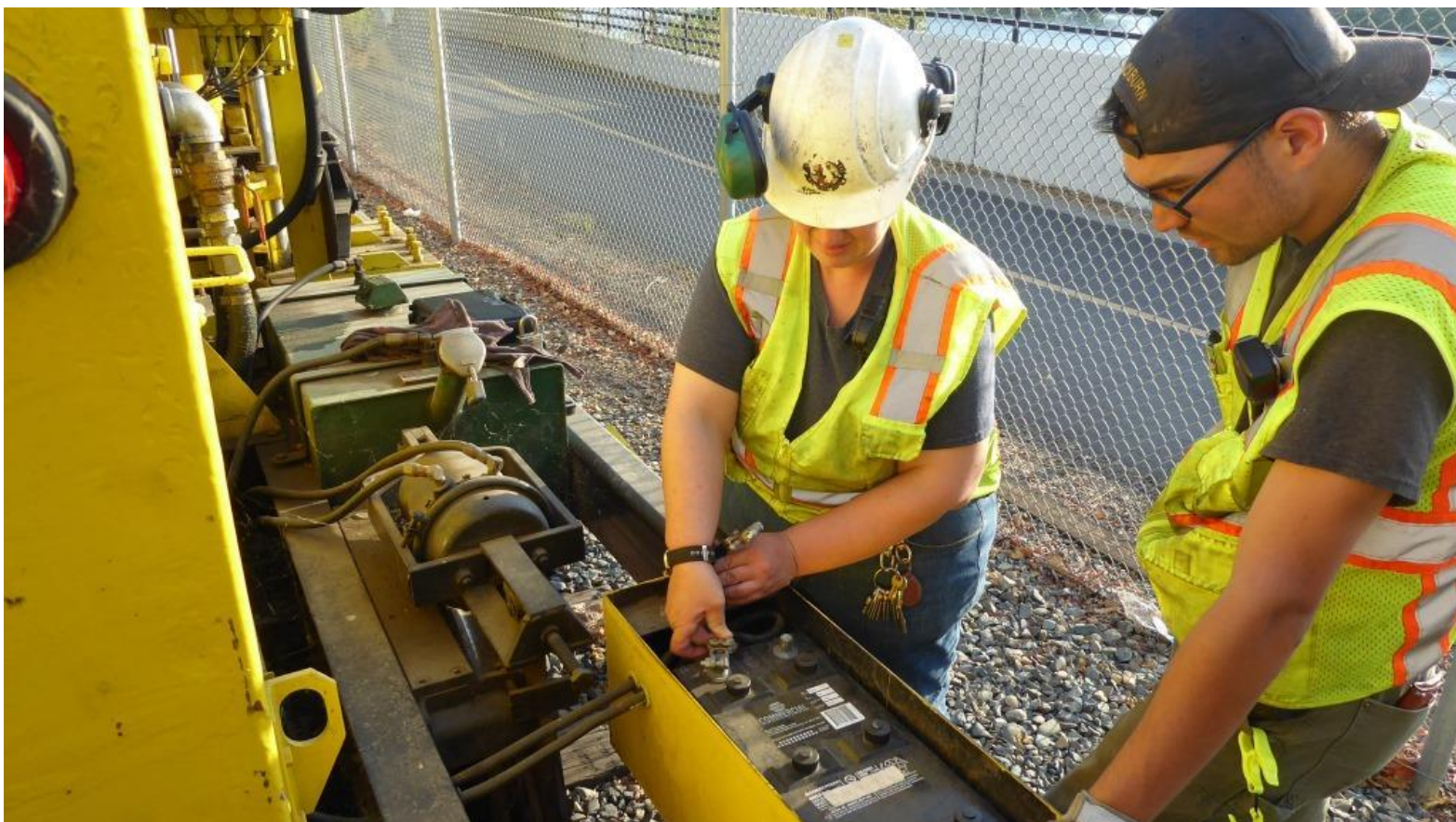


Alan and Kyle fit the final window shield into place on the regulator





Over in Old Sac., Heather, Kyle, and Matt install the regenerated battery into the tie-shear



Heather gets it all hooked up





The ballast regulator is finally out of the Shops! Conductor Frank conducts engineer Joe across the UP Main



Raise shields! The ballast regulator fully protected from the whims of vandals





Mike H. in the Kalamazoo pulls the flatcars back over to the Shops

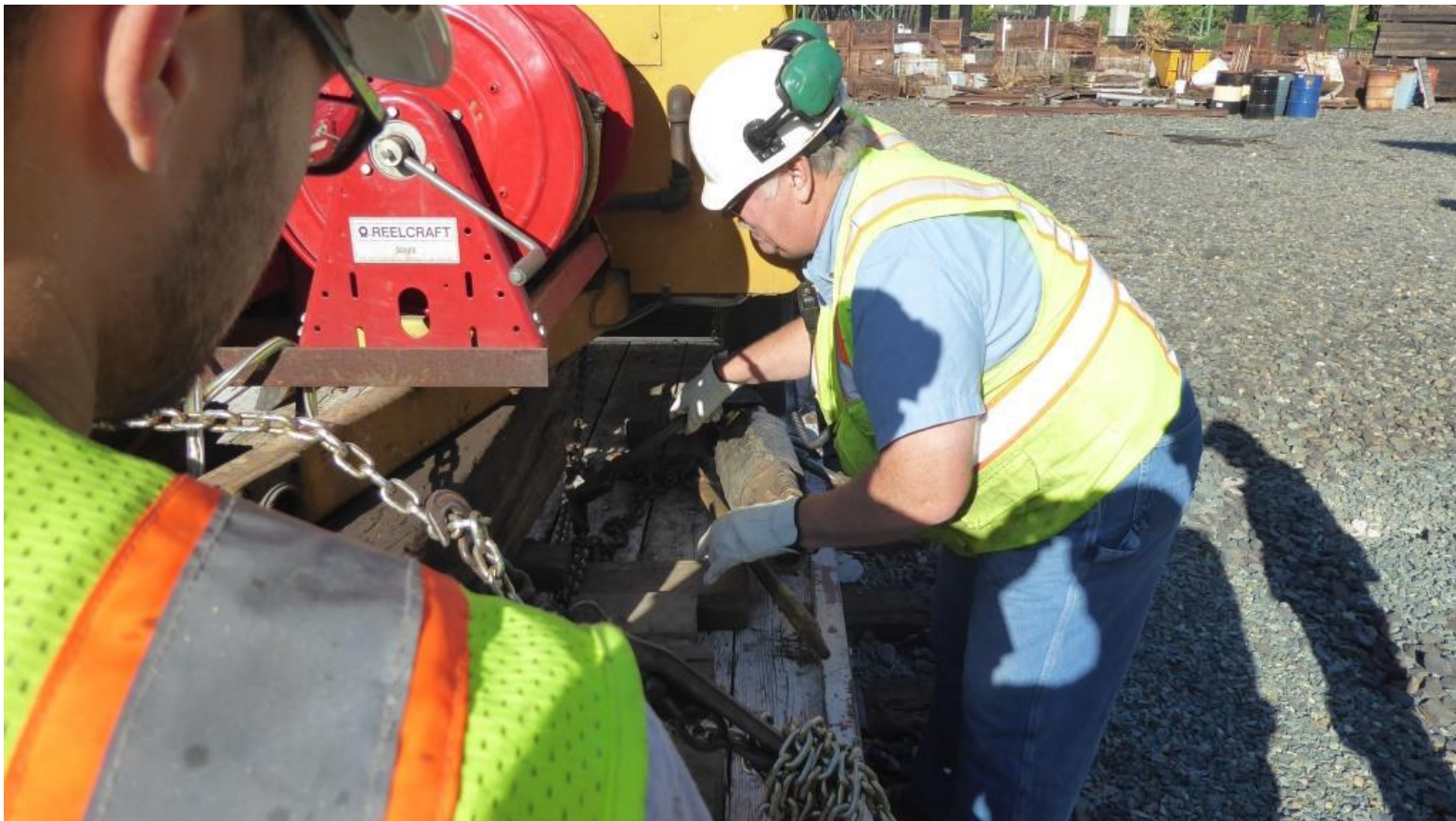


After loading the tire-mounted air-compressor on a flatcar, Alan, Joe, and Frank build cribbing under the hitch end for added support





Loaded and chained-down, the compressor is rolled inside



Before pulling the compressor across the UP Main, Chris double checks that the chains are all secure





A swift green signal indication from “Mad-dog” in Omaha frees the Kalamazoo and compressor for work out on the line

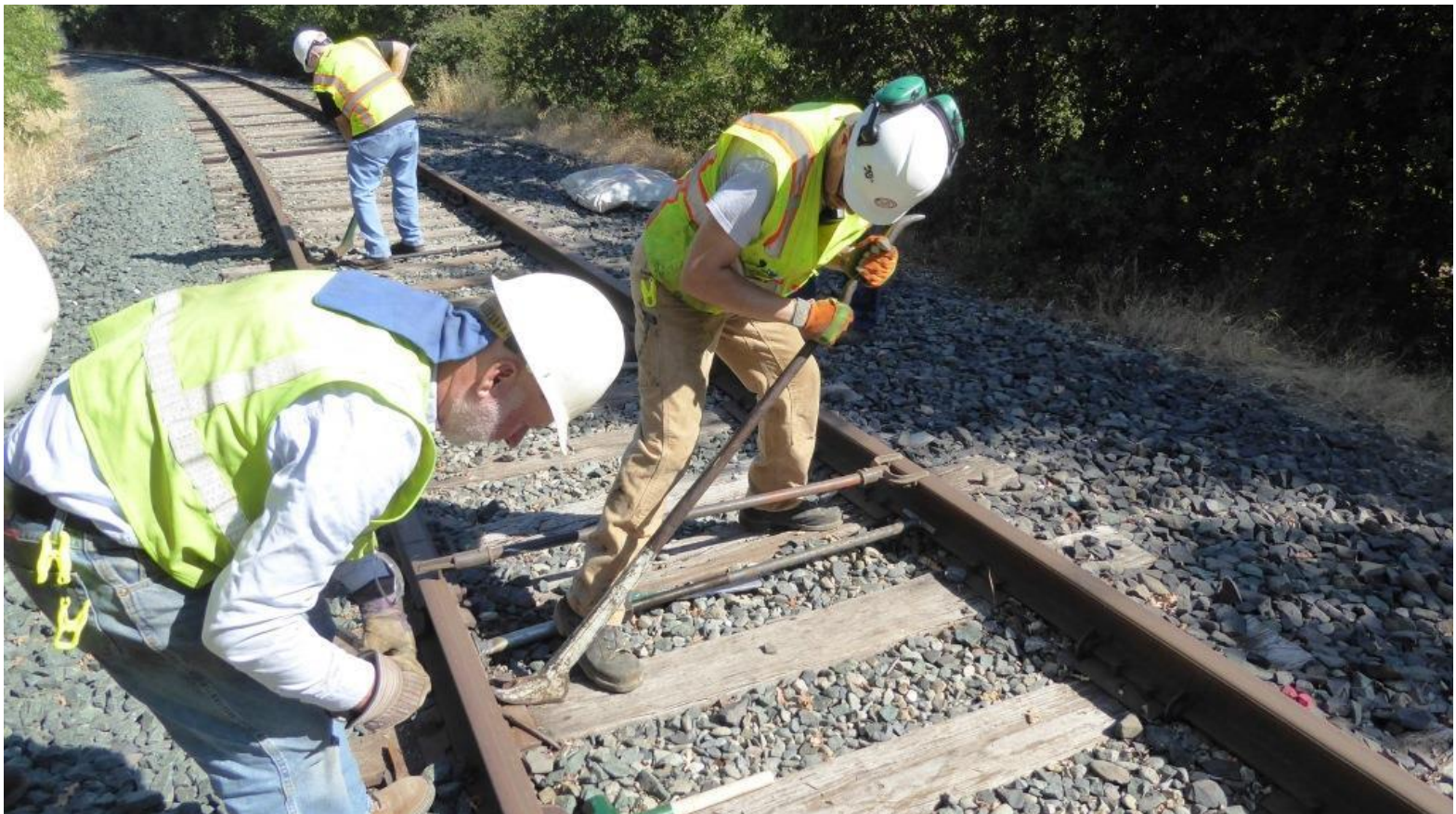


The Team arrives at Baths





Alan and Mary set up the rail spreader



Kyle pulls spikes with a claw-bar while Mike M. prepares to plug the old spike-hole



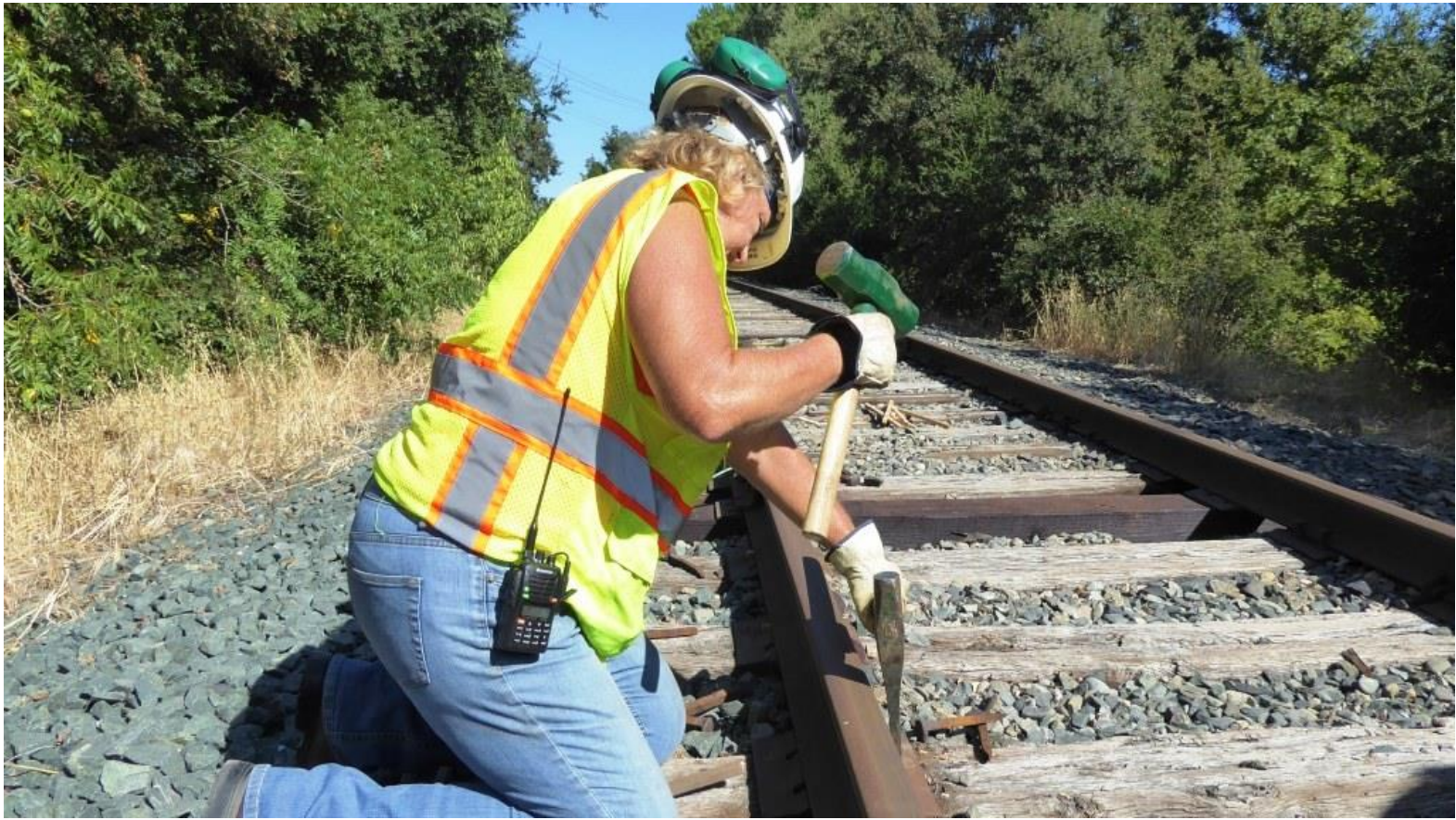


Bill was the spike-pulling champion on Saturday

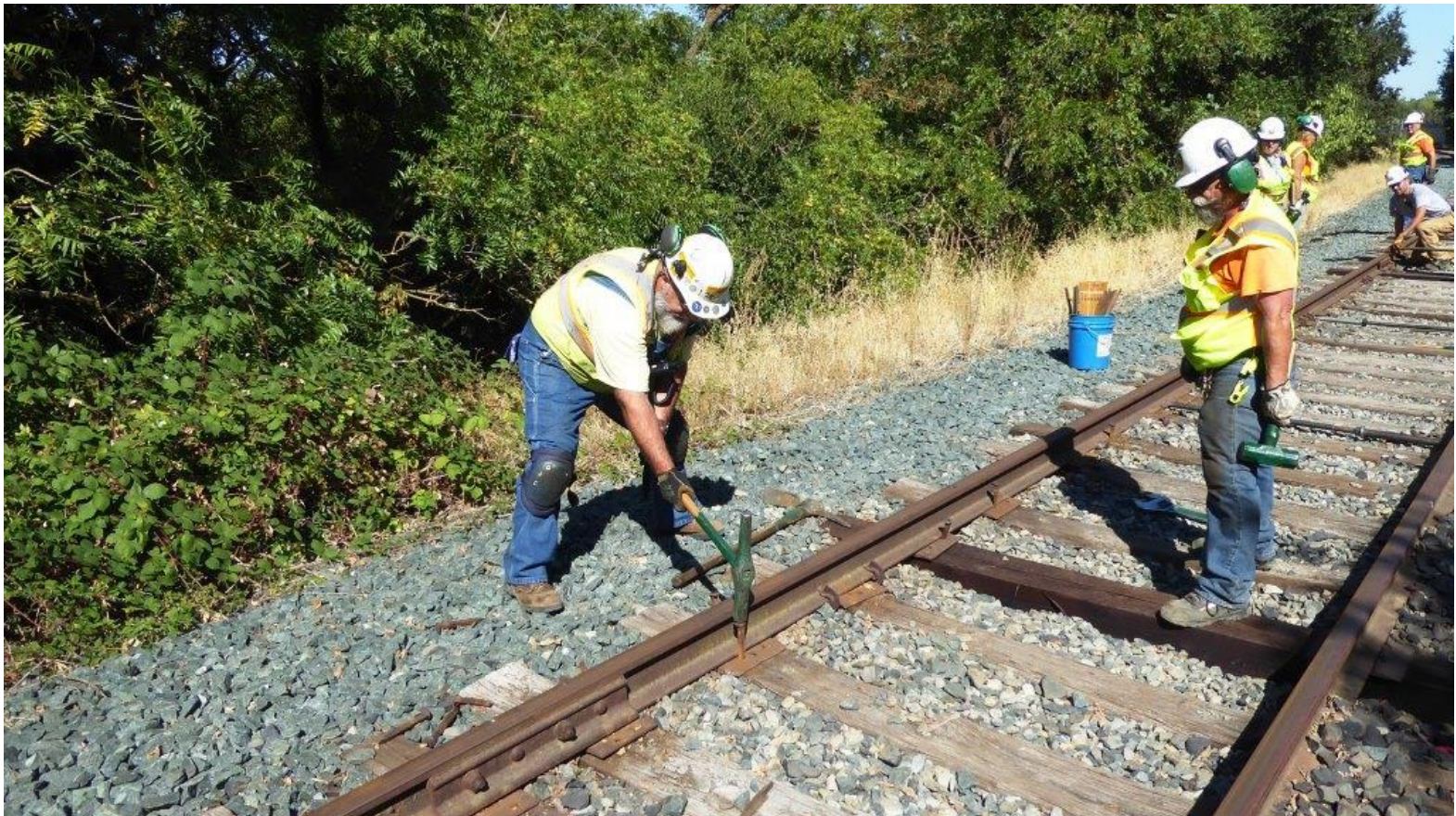


Kyle and Clem pull spikes and plug the old spike-holes



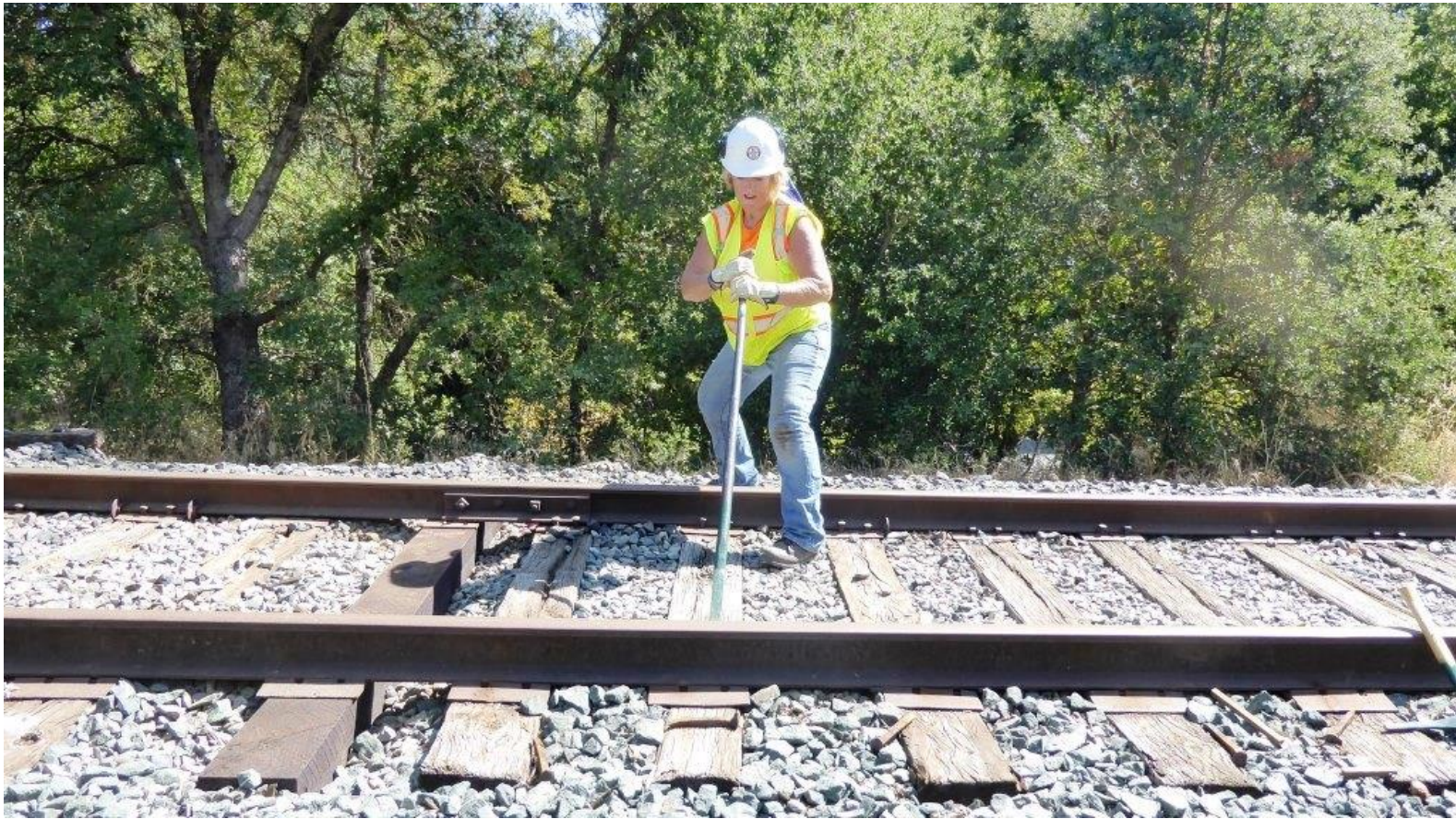


Bev drives a tie-plug deep into the tie



Mike F. hits the spike squarely on the head proving his spike-driving skills





Bev can't resist joining in the spike-pulling fun!



Mary and Mike F. verify the narrow gauge





Mike M. is excited for some good ol' fashioned pneumatic spike-driving fun!

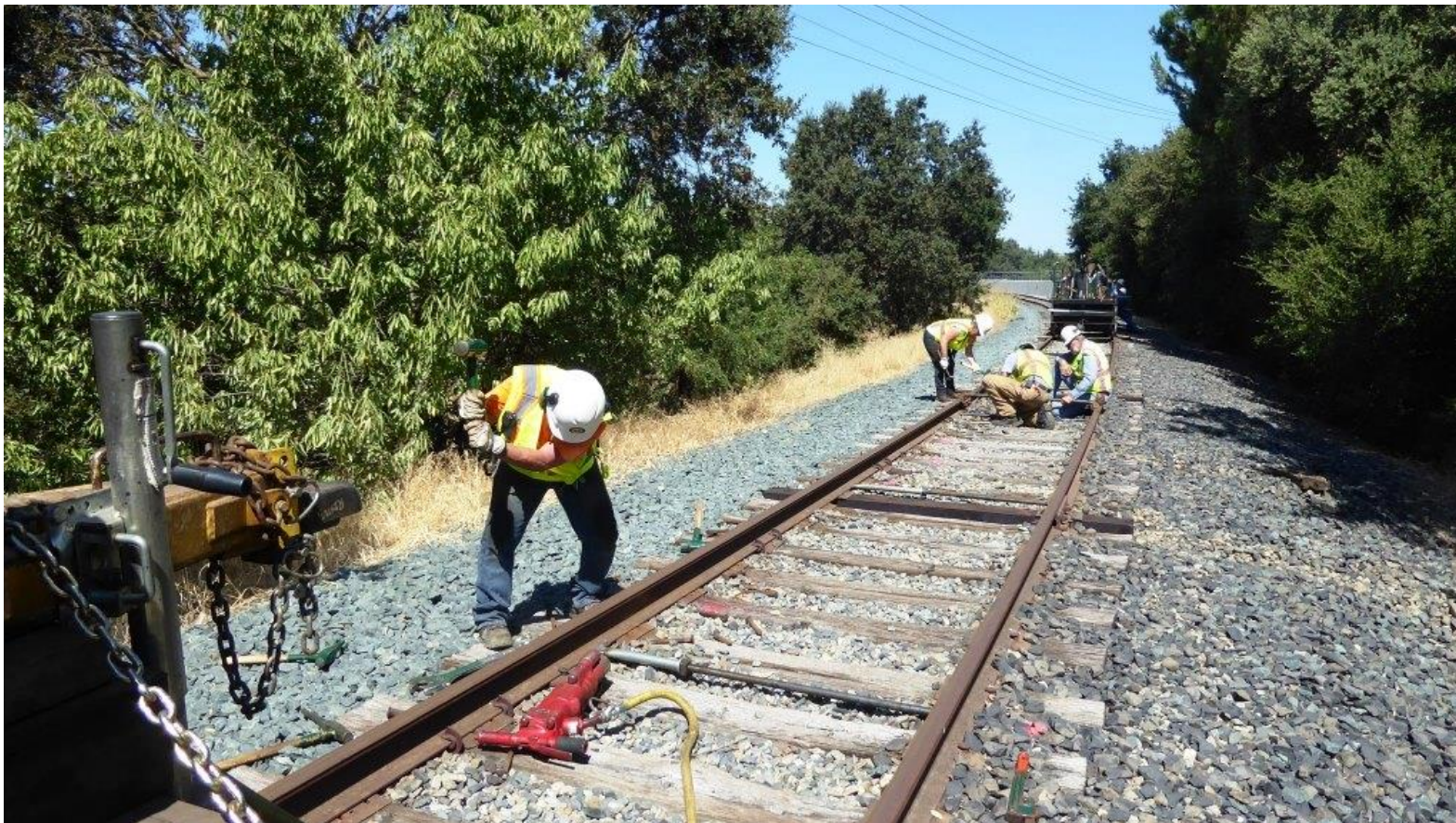


Heather sets spikes where the rail has been spread to the proper gauge.





Now Mike F. takes up the pneumatic spike-driver



Joe continues to set spikes around a spreader as Mary, Kyle, and Alan set up another spreader further up the hill





With temperatures now reaching the century mark, Chris in the Kalamazoo runs around the compressor at Baths to pull it home



The Team ducked-in at Miller Park to allow the Granite Rock 10 pass on its way south