

Getting to Scale in the Golden State

A working group to move California towards at-scale action to address the Fire and Forest Crisis

Where the Harvest Preserves the System: A Whole Systems Approach to Unified Forest Management Past Present and Future

The current coronavirus pandemic has triggered crisis responses around the world. One of the key goals has been “flattening the curve.” That is acting preemptively to forestall even great challenges in the future. That is also the exact goal of those dealing with the fire crisis. The more rapidly we act, the sooner and more effectively we can impact the problem. The solution to the ever-increasing occurrence of catastrophic fire in California and across the globe lies in a massive remobilization of resources and change in our priorities for how we manage forestry, fire and the landscape, as well the economies and communities that both support and derive critical benefits (clean air and drinking water not least of these) from them.

What can we learn from this year’s pandemic experience and other crisis responses in recent history to help mobilize energy around climate change? The proposed working group is designed to answer those questions and put the answers into action.

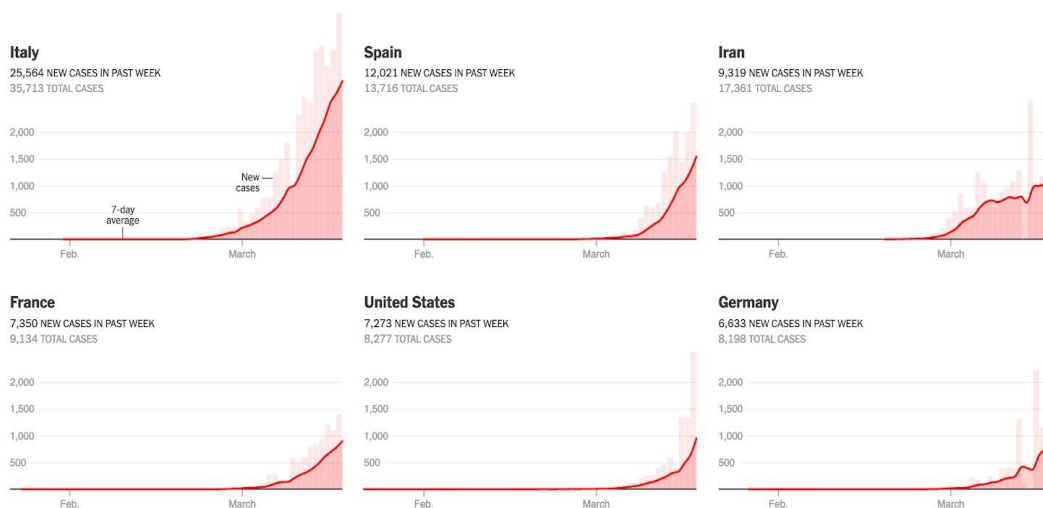


Figure 1. Infection Curves as of March 19, 2020. ¹

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/19/world/coronavirus-flatten-the-curve-countries.html>

Business as Usual and the High Costs of Doing Nothing

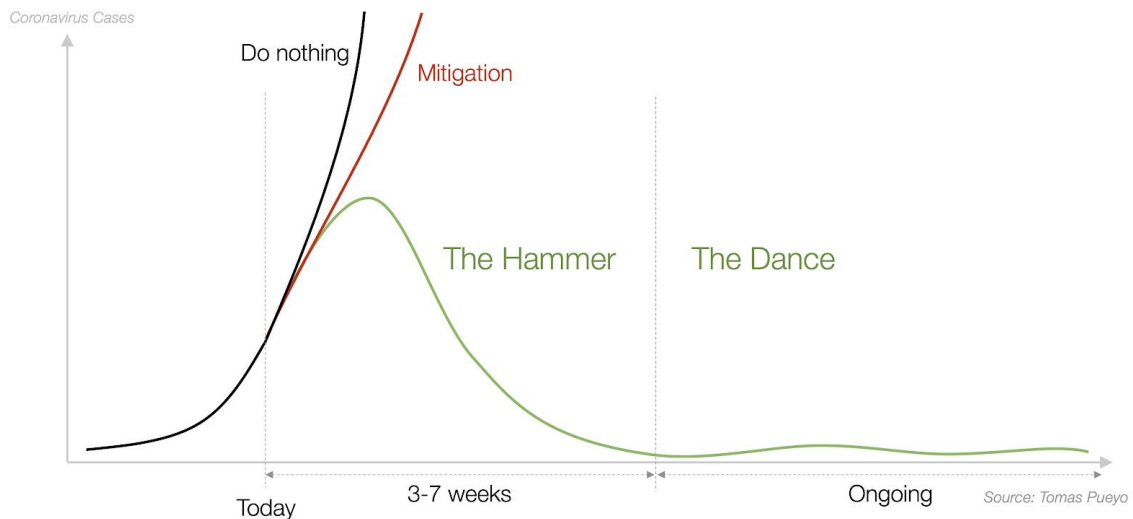


Figure 2. The “Hammer” reflects the costs of delay in the spread of the Corona Virus ²

- ❑ California is experiencing some of the first and worst manifestations of the global climate crisis in the US through devastating fires and weather events.
- ❑ California has put substantial time and energy into studying the Fire Emergency and has generated much useful information on the causes of the fire crisis. The state has also developed a series of potentially effective long-term strategies to combat the emergency. It has established a well-funded agency exclusively focused on fighting (and now preventing/minimizing) fire risk.
- ❑ Despite these measures and some soaring rhetoric, California’s actions fall orders of magnitude below their own understanding of the scale of response needed. Two years ago CalFire announced target goals of treating 1,000,000 acres/year (500,000 Federal/500,000 State/Private) but last year both agencies treated collectively less than 75,000 acres.
- ❑ In a preemptive move, on March 22, 2020, Gov. Newsom issued a [Fire Emergency declaration for 2020](#). The declaration includes support to increase fire prevention, improve forest management and identify long-term solutions. It also includes a

² <https://medium.com/@tomaspueyo/coronavirus-the-hammer-and-the-dance-be9337092b56>

provision for simplifying the procurement process.³ But the total support and anticipated treatments even under this emergency declaration fall far short of anticipated need.

- ❑ At the same time in Oregon, on March 10, 2020, Governor Kate Brown signed perhaps the most sweeping state managed [climate order](#) in the US, despite massive opposition by the state Republican legislators.⁴
- ❑ And in Washington, on March 25, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee signed legislation formally establishing a state policy recognizing and supporting the complete forest products sector as a climate solution.⁵

The Working Group

- ❑ We need to address our own social and governmental responses as part of a complex system with similarities to the very ecological problems we face – moving from a rhetorical position that acknowledges climate as a major problem to the necessary crisis management actions at the necessary scale.
- ❑ The process will begin with a summit of key Californian leadership and beyond and extend over 6-12 months for implementation of ideas generated by the summit.
- ❑ A Planning and Elaboration Task force of approximately 10 people will lay the groundwork for a larger, 3-day solutions-focused meeting of approximately 50-75 stakeholders including representatives from government, academia, policy centers/think tanks, forestry, environmental and conservation science, the arts, industry, architecture, urban planning, first nations, resilience designers, artists, local/regional politicians, housing, community groups, fire experts and emergency management.

³ “The “Innovation Procurement Sprint” seeks to turn government contracting on its head by giving the best and brightest minds an opportunity to have their wildfire solutions tested and evaluated in the field. The Governor ordered this “sprint” so that the best tools and technologies can be purchased under government contract while they are still cutting-edge, in an effort to save lives and properties.”

⁴ <https://www.ecowatch.com/oregon-executive-order-climate-2645460120.html>

⁵ https://www.union-bulletin.com/news/state/gov-inslee-approves-forestry-industry-carbon-bill/art_icle_30920988-d9ef-5232-ace4-91d32c0308cc.html



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There are several questions to address in relation to industrial-ecological feedback systems, conceptual orientations, information systems and bureaucratic systems (the four working group tracks).

- What current resources, feedback loops and response mechanisms could be amplified to bring them to scale? How could that be done?
- What are the main obstacles to such amplification of response, and how can they most efficiently be reduced?
- What new elements – concepts, information, programs, constraints, and/or dynamics need to be introduced to bring response to scale?
- How to measure the impact of thinning and prescribed fire on ecosystems, including water, biodiversity and other subsystems?
- What can history teach us about responding to this kind of crisis? Lessons from four examples will be considered: the current pandemic, the moonshot, the Great Depression and World War II

Data will be gathered on all ideas that emerge within the tracks. After the meeting, workgroups from each track will meet on a regular basis to continue to develop ideas, action plans and implementation – stimulating action at scale.



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Related Publications

CA Joint Wood Products Institute most Recent Report on Wood Products:

[Literature Review And Evaluation Of Research Gaps To Support Wood Products Innovation](#)

CA Fwd carbon neutrality: <https://www.cafwd.org/reporting/entry/new-study-highlights-critical-options-for-achieving-californias-carbon-neut>

CA Fwd call to action on fire for the economic summit:

<https://caeconomy.org/reporting/entry/californias-wildfire-crisis-new-call-to-action-report-urges-swift-massive-r>

PPIC on healthy headwaters: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/improving-the-health-of-californias-headwater-forests/>

PPIC on freshwater ecosystem rec's: <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/a-path-forward-for-californias-freshwater-ecosystems-recommendations.pdf>

PPIC community and forests and managing forest to reduce wildfire risk:

<https://www.ppic.org/blog/building-community-support-healthy-forests/>
<https://www.ppic.org/blog/managing-forests-to-reduce-wildfire-risks/>

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[Identifying Market Interests and Opportunities for Sierra Nevada Sustainable Forestry Materials](#) (Sandra Lupien, with Joshua Harrison)

[California's Forest Crisis and Opportunity](#) , White Paper submitted to incoming Newsom Administration (Robert Hambrecht, Joshua Harrison, Joe Desmond)