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## Getting to Scale in the Golden State

*Some notes on dealing with a flailing process...*

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.

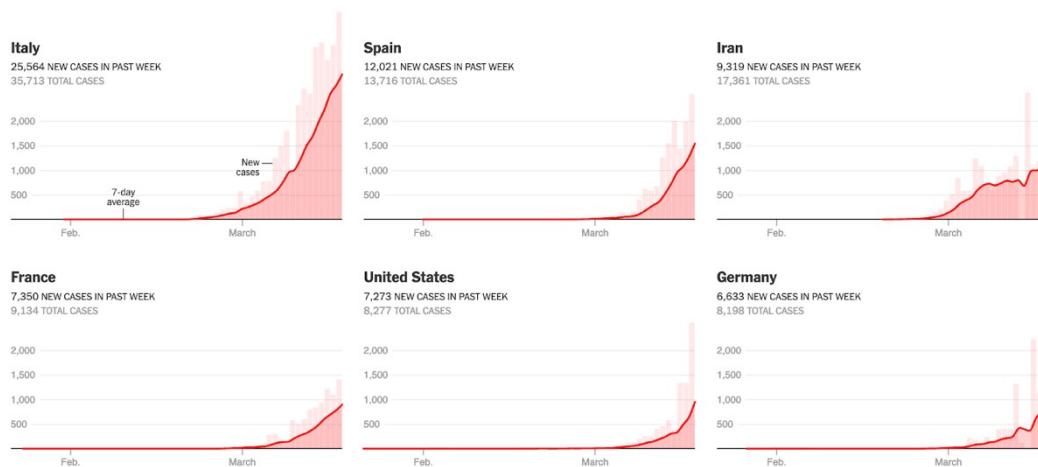


Figure 1. Infection Curves as of March 19, 2020.

## Business as Usual and the High Costs of Doing Nothing

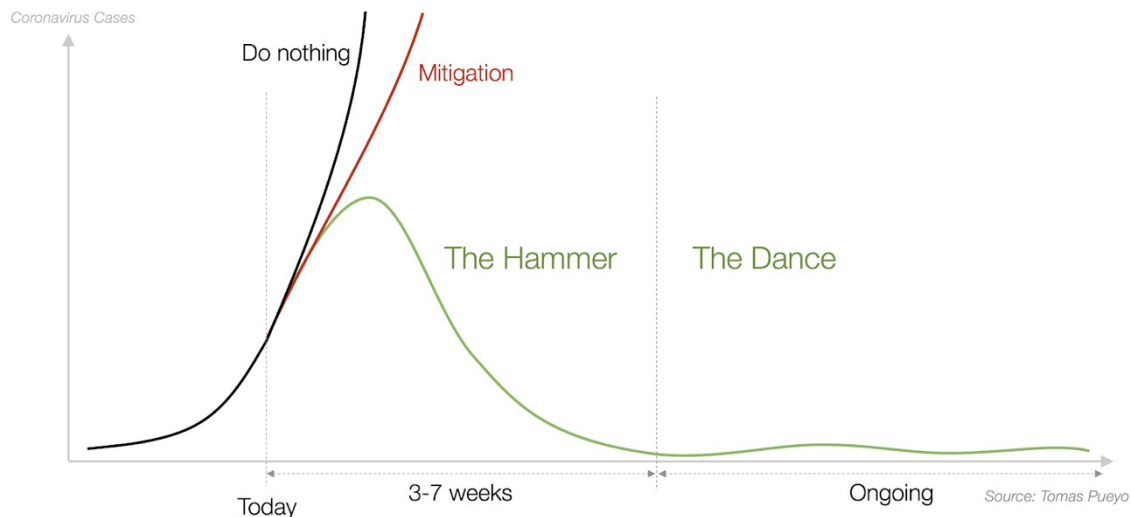


Figure 2. The “Hammer” reflects the costs of delay in the spread of the Corona Virus

- 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 provision for simplifying the procurement process. 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.



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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.

### **Summary: Where are we now**

1. California is experiencing some of the first and worst manifestations of the global climate crisis in the US through devastating fires.
2. California wants to be a national (and global) leader in addressing the Climate Crisis.
3. California is now the 5th largest economy in the world and so is well-positioned to respond at scale (also California currently has a budget surplus at the state level)
4. California has put substantial time and energy into studying the Fire Emergency and has generated useful information on the causes of the fire crisis. The state has also developed some 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.
5. 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 (2019) was only able to support treating 75,000 acres).
6. The challenge facing California is how can even a well-intentioned, well financed governing body organize its actions to respond to the real scale of the problem in the short timeline (under 10 years) we have to make meaningful change on the ground?
7. To address this issue we will have to address our own social and governmental responses as complex systems with similarities to the very ecological problems we are addressing. Moving from business as usual to a crisis management response is going to be critical for any realistic chance of success.

### **Current Situation: Business as Usual**

In spite of the urgency of the situation and rhetoric acknowledging it, California is still largely following a business as usual pattern: issue an order, do a study, set up a test or several tests, analyze results, step up the testing some, reanalyze and report until done.



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There are also encouraging signs. For example, spending is up on wildfire mitigation, home hardening and projects focusing on the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Efforts are far from scale, however.

California is also looking to Private/Public partnerships, where California is “nudging” solutions, but the private sector is expected to lead. To date the private sector has not stepped up/is not participating in fire reduction even though California businesses are heavily impacted by mega-fires.

Gov. Newsom has spoken widely about Climate but not specifically in terms of practical success. For example, there has been no call to make a “wood priority state” nor taking simple administrative actions which could be quickly implemented. Such steps have been outlined in a white paper by our organization and advocated by others.

Indeed, California has not yet addressed the true costs/benefits of ecologically driven solutions in a meaningful way, especially the enormous “costs of doing nothing” and the remarkable co-benefits associated with improving forest health.

### **Questions, Goals and Outcomes**

The challenge of transitioning governmental and social action from business as usual to at-scale crisis response involves similar, complex systems dynamics as the ecological problem itself.

### **Shifting the Metaphor: In a crisis, examine your priorities...**

Currently the state continues to view much of its decision making through increasingly less justifiable economic costs and benefits, with an overall focus on short term and definable results. Can we question our goals and outcomes to look at value differently?

1. Reducing the Carbon load in the atmosphere is the highest good
2. Finding ways to restore forest and water systems via clearing excess biomass wholistically parking most of that carbon in building materials that reduce concrete and steel production or in soils and landscapes that promote soil health carbon capture and understory
3. Workforce development that supports the two goals above creates a work cycle that is designed to maintain forest health, is place based and delivers value to both the workers and the economy at large



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### **Questions we have to address collectively:**

How to get the richest state, with one of the extensive bureaucratic infrastructures, to move to a true crisis management operation around the greatest crisis in human history? In other words, what feedback loops in the system need to be amplified and what system dynamics need to be minimized. More specifically,...

- What current resources and response mechanisms in California 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 so on – and/or dynamics need to be introduced to bring response to scale?
- What can history teach us about the dynamics of this kind of transition?

These questions bring to mind many particular issues and subsystems that will undoubtedly need to be addressed, including...

- Industrial-ecological feedback systems, involving wood utilization, regenerative forestry, housing using truly affordable and renewable materials . For example: can “California wood in California Houses” be a driver for the kind of systemic change we need?
- Conceptual orientations. How do we understand our goals. For example: at the most basic level, how do we distinguish between good fires and bad fires?
- Information feedback systems: How do we measure the impact of spending on mitigating wildfires, e.g., effects on carbon, water, biodiversity, tourism, air? And how to integrate workforce training into the overall crisis response?
- Bureaucratic systems. How do we shift our organizational energy from normally cautious goals to crisis response goals? For example, how to increase permitting efficiency without compromising environmental integrity and how to fast-track the conservation projects pipeline.



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*Models from History: How can we get to scale?*

### **Previous models for Crisis Management in recent US History –**

There is no perfect match but these three examples are most relevant

- Moonshot - In May of 1961, President Kennedy challenged the nation to put a 'man on the moon' in 10 years. On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong stepped off the Lunar Module and onto the Moon's surface. Hundreds of businesses were recruited for the effort, a new Agency NASA was created and tens of thousands of people contributed to what eventually became the US Space Program. Much of the work was rapid, improvised and done in parallel, with teams reforming based upon success. The speed of the mission often meant little attention was paid to full documentation. For example, no formal blueprints exist for the Saturn V, yet it managed to carry several generations of astronauts out into space.
- Great Depression - On March 3, 1933 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated at the 32nd President of the United States. The US was in the grips of the greatest economic catastrophe in its history, tens of millions were out of work and political unrest at record levels with no obvious answers. Although largely forgotten today, Franklin D. Roosevelt spent the first week of his Presidency dealing with a month-long series of bank closures that were ruining families nationwide. He closed the entire American banking system on March 6, 1933. On March 9, Congress passed the Emergency Banking Act, which Roosevelt used to effectively create federal deposit insurance when the banks reopened. At 10 p.m. ET that Sunday night, on the eve of the end of the bank holiday, Roosevelt spoke to a radio audience of more than 60 million people, to tell them in clear language "what has been done in the last few days, why it was done, and what the next steps are going to be." It was the first of 30 evening radio addresses that came to be called the Fireside Chats. Roosevelt coined the term "first 100 days" during a July 24, 1933, radio address. 13 major laws were enacted during this period. (wiki)
- WW2 - In 1941 on the eve of the US joining combat in WW2, the country had a peacetime economy alongside a political debate about how to deal with the war in Europe. By the end of the war, the US had mobilized in ways hardly imaginable now. By 1943 almost 25 percent of US fruits and vegetables were grown in backyard "Victory" gardens. Here's one specific personal example. On Dec 6, 1941, my great grandfather, Simon Farber, ran a medium sized factory in the South Bronx. He knew how to take stainless steel rolls and wrap them about aluminum



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disks, put handles on the result and deliver them to kitchens across the Northeast. By the end of February 1942, he was manufacturing tens of thousands of machine gun links every week. He was one of a 100,000 factories that underwent a similar rapid almost simultaneous transformation.

What all these solutions have in common: Massive Government Intervention and support (not nudging) into a range of businesses, Collective action led by public leadership, and not least a willingness to move fast and accept large amounts of risk by investing in potential solutions that might or might not pan out.

### **Conclusion: Where the Harvest Preserves the System**

We need to ground our actions in (rebuilding) an approach to forest and forest management that promotes Forest and Watershed health as the highest goal. This means building an economic model whose component parts support that goal.

200 years of disastrous forest policy has shown us:

#### **Business as Usual has failed**

- We know enough to know what we need to do
- We know we don't need to know everything to get started and that we will risk making mistakes and doing some things over
- We know that we will learn what we need to do the “the doing”

## **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-studyhighlights-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-actionreport-urges-swift-massive-r>





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

PPIC on freshwater ecosystem rec's: <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/a-pathforward-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)