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State Lawmakers Want To Curb Development in Wildfire-Prone Areas

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Inmate firefighters work as the Bond Fire burns shortly after sunrise in the Silverado Canyon area of Orange County on December 3, 2020 near Irvine, California. (Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

Several California lawmakers are considering a bill that would limit sprawl in wildfire-prone areas.

The bill comes on the heels of [a new report](#) by the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), which found rampant construction in high fire-risk Southland wildlands to be a major contributor to the increase in costs associated with fire suppression and damages.

Tiffany Yap, a scientist with the center who co-authored the report, said people pose the biggest threat in terms of starting wildfires.

“95% of contemporary wildfires in California are caused by human sources like power lines, car sparks, electrical equipment, cigarettes,” she said. “Building new developments in high fire-prone environments increases unintentional ignition, and places more people in danger.”

The report also highlighted several recently-approved new developments in areas that have repeatedly burned in wildfires, including an Antelope Valley development from the Northlake company approved by L.A. County in 2019, and several developments approved by San Diego County in 2019 and 2020.

The Center for Biological Diversity [has sued L.A. County](#) over the Northlake development.

According to the report, wildfires cost the state \$23 billion between 2015-18 in areas managed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire. Almost 200 people have died in such blazes since 2015, and more than 50,000 structures were destroyed.