California wildfire flares but within line crews have built

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A firefighter uses a drip torch to ignite vegetation while trying to stop the Dixie Fire from spreading in Lassen National Forest, Calif., on Monday, July 26, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

California's largest wildfire so far this year was flaring up Friday but it

was because the flames were chewing through unburned islands of vegetation within a perimeter that firefighters have built, authorities said.

The Dixie Fire covered 376 square miles (974 square kilometers) in the mountains of Northern California where 42 homes and other buildings have been destroyed and more than 10,000 are still threatened.

The vegetation burning inside the fire on Thursday produced a huge "fire cloud," towering columns of smoke and ash that can pose a danger to firefighters. Residents were given assurances that it had been expected and would happen again but did not mean crews were losing control they have on the fire.

"There's nothing close to our line right now. It's all interior fuels burning," Mike Wink, an incident commander, said in an online briefing.

The fire northeast of the town of Paradise, which was largely destroyed in 2018 by the nation's deadliest wildfire in a century, has been burning since July 13 and is more than 20% contained.

Meanwhile, concerns over the risk of rolling outages in the coming weeks prompted California Gov. Gavin Newsom to sign an emergency proclamation on Friday that offers cash incentives to big energy users such as factories or casinos to conserve when the power supply is tight.

Cal Fire Capts. Derek Leong, right, and Tristan Gale monitor a firing operation, where crews set a ground fire to stop a wildfire from spreading, while battling the Dixie Fire in Lassen National Forest, Calif., on Monday, July 26, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

The state could face a shortage of 3,500 megawatts on days when soaring heat drives up demand. That's partly because an intensifying drought has reduced water levels in reservoirs and diminished output from the hydroelectric dams.

A historic drought and recent heat waves tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists say climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires

more frequent and destructive.

The U.S. Drought Monitor reported this week that while a robust monsoon has delivered drought-easing rainfall to the Southwest, critically dry conditions persist across Northern California and the Northwest, where there has been an expansion of "exceptional drought," the worst category.

Flames from the Dixie Fire crest a hill in Lassen National Forest, Calif., near Jonesville on Monday, July 26, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

A firefighter uses a drip torch to ignite vegetation while trying to stop the Dixie Fire from spreading in Lassen National Forest, Calif., on Monday, July 26, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

In remote southern Oregon, the nation's largest wildfire was more than halfway contained after scorching over 646 square miles (1,673 square kilometers) in the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Active fire behavior there also was mainly interior pockets of vegetation burning, a situation report said.

Nearly 22,000 firefighters and support personnel were battling 83 large, active wildfires covering 2,720 square miles (7,044 square kilometers) in 13 states Friday, the National Interagency Fire Center said.

"Fire weather and the conditions of the fuels across the country continue to challenge wildland fire managers," an agency statement said.