

# THE OBSERVER

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## Film about La Grande family near release

'Joe Bell' stars Mark Wahlberg, opens July 23

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The compelling and tragic story of Jadin Bell and his father, Joe Bell, will soon hit the silver screen.

"Joe Bell" is set to open in theaters July 23. The announcement has been made on the Twitter site of Mark Wahlberg, an American actor, producer and songwriter, who plays Joe Bell in the film.

"This family and their story touched my heart in a big way," the social media post said.

The story of Joe and Jadin Bell made national headlines in 2013 after Jadin, a 15-year-old sophomore at La Grande High School, took his own life after being bullied because he was gay.

Joe Bell later started on a national walk in memory of his son to draw attention to bullying. He was killed on Oct. 9, 2013, while walking along a road when he was hit by a truck in Colorado.

The movie was originally scheduled to be released in theaters in February but the release was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patty Johnson, manager of La Grande's Granada Theatre, said she is attempting to get the movie booked for showings at the theater. Johnson said she first needs to receive authorization from its distributor. She said distributors have requirements for elements like screen size and audience capacity that must be met before their films can be shown in a theater. Johnson said she does not anticipate problems in receiving authorization.

The film is being released by Solstice Studios and was directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green and its screenplay was written by Diana Ossana and Larry McMurtry. Ossana and McMurtry also wrote the screenplay for the 2005 landmark film Brokeback Mountain. The stars of Joe Bell, in addition to Wahlberg, include Connie Britton and Morgan Lily. The movie was filmed at sites around Utah, including Salt Lake City and Summit County.

Although the film was not shot in Union County, Wahlberg

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Tuba player Alyssa Moy works through the notes at the Music Camps at Wallowa Lake Reimagined program held in the commons of Eastern Oregon University on Tuesday, June 22, 2021. The program, citing concerns over COVID-19 and the lodging at Wallowa Lake, turned to Eastern Oregon University as a way to get prospective music students back into the program, which was shut down last year due to the pandemic.

## Making music

Wallowa Lake Music Camps story now has EOU twist

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — They are sounds of youthful promise and a musical revival, sounds the slowing COVID-19 pandemic can no longer mute.

They are the band melodies youths are playing outdoors this week while attending the Music Camps at Wallowa Lake Reimagined program, one sailing again after being capsize in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is now being conducted outdoors at Eastern Oregon University as a day camp after traditionally being run, with the help of overnight accommodations, each summer at Wallowa Lake since 1999.

"It is so wonderful to be back. It was such a disappointment last year," said Linda Birnbaum, a member of the Music Camps at Wallowa Lake's board.

The pandemic made it impossible for the camp program to be conducted with



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Instructor Duncan Titus guides a group of tuba players through "Songs 4 Tubas" during a practice ensemble held on the grassy fields in Eastern Oregon University on Tuesday, June 22, 2021.

overnight accommodations at Wallowa Lake but organizers were able to make the necessary accommodations to hold it as a daytime only event. Almost 40 students have been attending sessions at the camp at Eastern Oregon. Students playing brass

instruments received instruction from Monday, June 21, through Wednesday, June 23, and woodwind players are being taught from Thursday, June 24, through Saturday, June 26.

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## Local live concerts set to resume

Bart Budwig will perform June 26 at HQ in La Grande

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Music lovers across the world are itching to get back to live shows following a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With infection numbers lowering nationwide, the owners of HQ on Depot Street in La Grande have sights set on a regular slate of concerts returning to the venue.

"It's really challenging right now at half capacity, but we want to engage the community and get active and get people moving and shaking again," said HQ co-owner Chris Jennings.

Jennings and co-owner Jesse Cimone hosted HQ's first live concert since the pandemic on Saturday, May 22, when Klamath Falls artist Arthur Buezo graced the local stage. The owners were unsure how the turnout would be, but the event reached capacity and they even had to turn away guests at the front doors.

"The impression is that people are eager to get back," Cimone said. "Keeping that eagerness is really important."

### Staying afloat during pandemic

With state and local guidelines still in place for indoor gatherings, HQ is able to welcome in approximately 50 attendees for concerts. This limit will be in place on Saturday, June 26, when Enterprise native Bart Budwig comes to town. Brian Mandella will open for Budwig, with the concert set to start at 8 p.m. and doors opening at 7 p.m.

Looking forward, the owners of HQ hope that heightened vaccination numbers in Oregon will lead to the possibility of larger capacity limits for events.

"It's going to be a slow build into public events," Jennings said. "Hopefully by August we're doing at least two to three shows a month again."

The main challenge of a limited capacity is the lost potential revenue in ticket and beverage sales.

"The biggest problem is that

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## Oregon drier than last year as fire season begins

Nearly 80% of state is in 'severe' drought

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
Capital Press

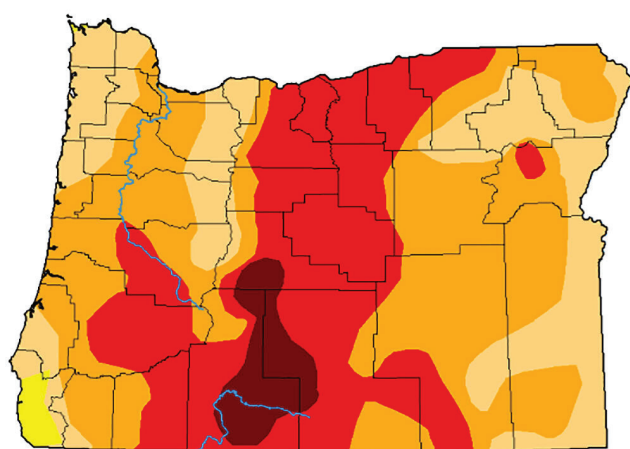
CORVALLIS — Historically dry conditions are raising concerns that another long wildfire season may be ahead in Oregon.

Experts at Oregon State University held a virtual forum Monday, June 21, to discuss this year's drought and fire conditions. Meanwhile, several large blazes

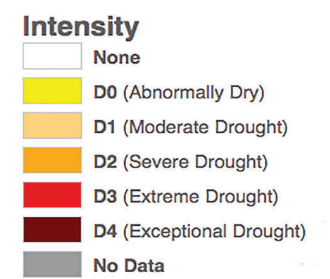
are already burning thousands of acres and temperatures are expected to reach into the triple-digits statewide.

"Right now, we are drier at this point than we were at this point last year," said Larry O'Neill, state climatologist with the Oregon Climate Service. "I think we're in the thick of it right

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### Oregon



U.S. Drought Monitor/Contributed Graphic

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

	<b>Tonight</b> 61 Low Partly cloudy		<b>Friday</b> 93/63 Mostly sunny; hot
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### CONTACT US

541-963-3161  
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Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page 4A.



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