

# ←350 Montana

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## The Man Who Decided Things Are Not Going to be All Right

On Sunday, May 7, from 4 to 6 P.M., at the Bozeman Public Library, 626 East Main in Bozeman, 350 Montana will introduce Leonard Higgins, an ordinary hero.

There are many kinds of heroes. We know the swashbuckler, the Hollywood alpha who bests all his adversaries. We know the anti-hero, the Don Quixotes, who manage their quest in spite of their misbegotten selves. Our favorite at 350 Montana, given the current state of the climate and our Deniers-in-Chief, is the everyman, the average American citizen who steps forward with great moral courage.

Bozemanites have an opportunity to meet one of these brave souls, who recently took personal risks to defend our planet, our environment, our quality of life ... and, if you read the scientific literature, maybe all life as we know it.

The background is that, on October 11, 2016, five ordinary citizens chose to act to maintain their moral beliefs commensurate with the science of the climate crisis. In the face of the abject failure of public policy to deal with climate change, they closed valves on the five pipelines carrying Alberta tar sands crude oil into the United States.

Higgins, Jay O'Hara, Ken Ward, Emily Johnston, and Annette Klapstein shut five major cross-border pipelines in four states carrying millions of barrels of tar sands crude. The valve turners simultaneously entered valve stations in remote locations 1,600 miles across four northern U.S. states.

They were supporting the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, which was trying to protect its water and land from the \$3.7 billion Dakota Access pipeline carrying oil to the Gulf Coast.

Fifteen minutes before shutting the valves, the valve turners called operating companies and emergency services. In response, the firms shut off the oil. The simple plan highlighted the vulnerability of energy infrastructure and stunned policy makers and energy executives.

Higgins must have drawn the short straw because he turned off a pipeline in Chouteau County, Montana, near Coal Banks Landing. He awaits trial and faces up to 10 years in prison. After his December 6, 2016 arraignment in Fort Benton he said the possibility of incarceration paled in comparison to the prospect of climate change. "Bottom line: we're facing a far greater threat than prison," he said.

Retired after a 30-year career as an IT specialist for the State of Oregon, Higgins' trial will be in Fort Benton in July. His Montana speaking tour this May will take him to Missoula, Bozeman, and Whitefish.

Valve turner, Jay O'Hara puts Higgins' talk next Sunday in context. "Montana is as good a place as any to have that conversation," he says. "It's a conversation we need to have in the heart of America with average, everyday citizens."

350 Montana wants to bring folks together to learn about the moral grounds for climate actions, pay tribute to their bravery, and raise money for their legal defense. Because . . .

Every once in a while—not often enough, mind you—some very brave souls put themselves in harm's way to right the wrongs of our time. *They are our ordinary heroes.* Sometimes their bravery is rewarded by arrest, trial, and threats of jail.

**For more information please visit:** [www.350montana.org](http://www.350montana.org) and [www.facebook.com/climatedirectaction/](https://www.facebook.com/climatedirectaction/)

**NOTE TO MEDIA:** Leonard Higgins is available for interviews via telephone or in person. Please schedule interviews with *350 Montana*.