

## May is Bike Month

The weather has turned perfect for biking, and May is National Bike Month! The League of American Bicyclists sponsors National Bike Month to help us celebrate the good things about bicycling ([www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)).

Start off in Reading by participating in Reading Care's bike 'recycling' event. If you have a bike that you no longer use, or that your children have outgrown, but is in *good working condition*, donate it to the bike swap at the Reading Municipal Light Department (230 Ash Street, rain or shine) on May 3<sup>rd</sup> (11:00am -12:30pm) or Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> (9:00 - 11:00am). Then go back on May 4<sup>th</sup> to see if there's a bike that would fit you.

On Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> pick a bike from 12:00 - 12:30pm if you've donated, or it's open to all from 12:30 - 1:30pm. For more information, contact [info@-readingcares.org](mailto:info@-readingcares.org).

If you have a bicycle and want to get ready for bike season, here are a few maintenance tips from <http://bicycling.about.com> and [www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/bike-maintenance.html](http://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/bike-maintenance.html). Simple tune-up tasks don't require special knowledge or tools, but require some supplies.

Always check your tire pressure, a quick check by squeezing the tire between thumb and fingers will let you know right away if the tire is really low on pressure. To pump up your tires, look for the recommended air pressure on your tire, printed on the sidewall of the tire.

When you inflate the tire, check the air pressure as you go to ensure that you're on target. Some bike pumps have a tire gauge built in, otherwise you'll need a tire gauge to check. Be sure to check the pressure frequently as you pump up the tire so that you do not overinflate your tire.

To clean and lubricate your bike, start by pulling together some basic cleaning supplies. Here's REI's list of basic items for most cleaning tasks:

- Clean rags: a good supply both for grease, oil and wax-related tasks and for general cleaning and drying.
- Soap: for frame washing - use something mild, like diluted dishwashing soap or preformulated bike wash cleaner.
- Water: despite its potential to cause rust, clean water is still a useful cleaning tool.
- Brushes: use a couple of different sizes to get into hard-to-reach places to remove the grime that rinsing alone can't get; old toothbrushes work great.
- Solvents: some type of general solvent for cleaning up gummy parts like your bike chain. Choose a solvent designed to be easy on the environment (and you!). No matter what solvent you use, make sure you dispose of it properly.

Your chain is your bike's most "at risk" lubricated part. It should be lubed frequently to slow the rate of chain wear. REI recommends you remove the chain from your bike from time to time (depending upon your riding style and conditions) and thoroughly clean it. The more frequently you spot-lube your chain, the less necessary off-bike cleanings (and chain replacements) become.

In general, lubricate your chain whenever it squeaks or appears "dry." Lubing after wet rides will help keep your chain from rusting. Avoid over-lubricating, and don't lubricate the chain

immediately before riding. Give it a couple of hours to allow the lube to fully penetrate, and then wipe away any excess. If you lube just before riding, you'll end up flinging lubricant all over.

Set the gears on your bike so that the chain is on the largest ring in the front and on the smallest socket in the back. For a quick lube, use a lightweight oil specially designed for bikes. Slowly turn the pedals backwards as you apply the oil. Light lubrication is the key, and wipe off excess at the end.

This year's Bay State Bike Week runs May 11 and runs through May 19<sup>th</sup>. There are bike path rides and a cornucopia of film screenings, bike breakfasts, festivals and more. You can join the fun of Bay State Bike Week through local community events. Find one near you by visiting Bay State Bike Week's webpage at <http://baystatebikeweek.org/events/>.

Happy cycling!

A column by Reading Climate Committee member Gina Snyder