

Parks on the Air

PRESENTED BY K8DOJ



A little about me

- ▶ Licensed in March of 2025
- ▶ Pass the General in April 2025 and Extra in October
- ▶ First POTA Activation on August 31st, 2025
- ▶ Currently have 140 Activations at 72 unique parks
- ▶ I am NOT an expert but I am a passionate POTA Activator and Hunter and willing to share what I have learned

What is POTA and what it is Not

- ▶ A Non-profit organization run by a group of volunteers
- ▶ POTA is not a contest and not run by ARRL
- ▶ It is not associated with OSPOTA, KYPOTA or INPOTA
- ▶ It is an INTERNATIONAL program system that encourages amateur radio operators to set up portable stations
- ▶ Started in 2017 as ARRL's National Parks on the Air ended
- ▶ It tracks contacts and grants awards to HUNTERS and ACTIVATORS
- ▶ Contacts can be on any band and any mode

Hunters and Activators

Hunters

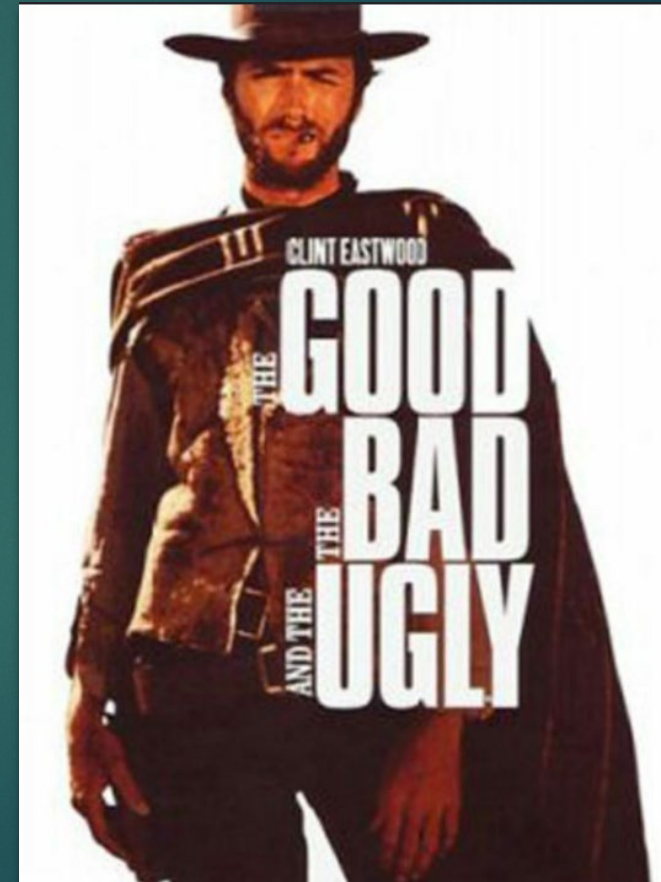
- ▶ Create a POTA account if you want to track awards
- ▶ At QTH or base station
- ▶ Scan the bands looking for activators
- ▶ Answer CQ from the activators
- ▶ No logging necessary

Activators

- ▶ Must setup a POTA account
- ▶ Setup in a designed POTA site
- ▶ Call CQ
- ▶ Log contacts
- ▶ Upload contacts to POTA site

The good, the bad the ugly

- ▶ Why is POTA controversial?
 - ▶ Not ARRL contest
 - ▶ Can crowds band space, especially 20m
 - ▶ Changes the 'pace' of traditional ham radio
- ▶ The positive side
 - ▶ Gives life to the bands – use it or lose it
 - ▶ Has inspired a new generation of operators
 - ▶ Give operators a chance to practice their portable op skills more than 2x per year
 - ▶ Increased visibility to the hobby
 - ▶ Chance to try new antenna designs



Getting Started



- ▶ Go to the POTA website <https://pota.app>
- ▶ Click the SIGN UP
- ▶ Read information available at <https://docs.pota.app/>
 - ▶ Rules
 - ▶ Guides
 - ▶ References and Resources
 - ▶ Announcements
 - ▶ Much more



Hunting

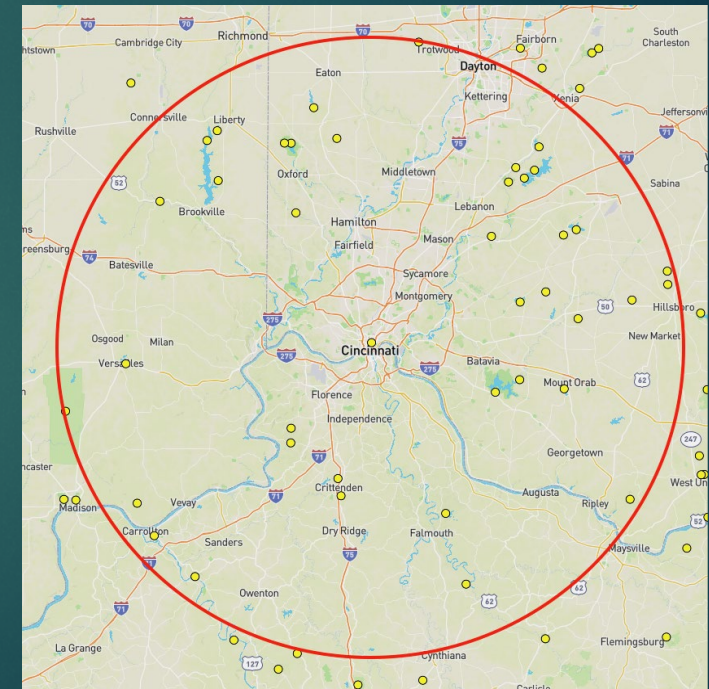
- ▶ Web interface walkthrough
<https://pota.app/#/>
- ▶ Finding activator stations
- ▶ Filtering and Sorting
- ▶ Adding a spot



Activating - Parks

- ▶ How to find a park – using the map or search
- ▶ If you are going to do more than a few – keep track

POTA Parks									
Activated	Number	Park Name	State	Address	# of Ac	Min Drive From Home	Map Link	Ant Space?	Notes
☒	US-8638	Indian Creek State Wildlife	OH			34	https://maps.app.goo.gl/8znPWKumt4BcC7dG7		
☒	US-9457	Della Gates & Edward Charles Bott Wildlife Preserve	OH	Blanchester, OH 45107		25	https://maps.app.goo.gl/Z6WeF	No	
☒	US-9402	Dean A. Culbertson State Nature Preserve	OH	8865 OH-730, Clarksville, OH 45113		31	https://maps.app.goo.gl/QGKXU	No	
☒	US-9489	Oldaker State Wildlife Area	OH			46	https://maps.app.goo.gl/rJMghmzWX6Sya		Off of Rt.50
☒	US-1972	Little Miami State Park	OH					Yes	
☒	US-1993	Stonelick State Park	OH			21		Yes	
☒	US-1943	Cowan Lake	OH			35		Yes	
☒	US-1948	East Fork State Park	OH			31			
☒	US-8114	East Fork State Wildlife Area	OH			31			
☒	US-9467	Grant Lake State Wildlife Area	OH			39			
☒	US-1940	Caesar Creek State Park	OH			35			
☒	US-7850	Caesar Creek Lake State Wildlife Area	OH			35			
☒	US-1959	Hueston Woods State Park	OH			55			
☒	US-2275	Whitewater Memorial State Park	IN	Brookville					
☒	US-4161	Quakertown on Brookville Lake State Recreation Area	IN	Brookville					
☒	US-4162	Mounds on Brookville Lake State Recreation Area	IN	Brookville					
☒	US-7956	Beargrass Creek State Nature Preserve	KY						
☒	US-1254	E.P. Tom Sawyer State Park	KY						
☒	US-7847	Caesar Creek Gorge State Nature Preserve	OH			35	https://maps.app.goo.gl/M3hS1z1KnsQSnHh7		
☒	US-9411	Halls Creek Woods State Nature Preserve	OH			23			Difficult w/o verticle
☒	US-0875	William Howard Taft National Historic Site	OH			26		No	Difficult w/o verticle
☒	US-7849	Spring Valley State Wildlife Area	OH	1 Collett Rd, Waynesville, OH 45068		45	https://maps.app.goo.gl/dXBCfrA1ksrH15f		North of Ceasars Creek
☒	US-9461	Fallsville State Wildlife Area	OH			52			
☒	US-9462	Fallsville South State Wildlife Area	OH			53			
☒	US-9492	Pater State wildlife Area	OH			44	https://maps.app.goo.gl/HwyShryWatdBf		Almost to Oxford
☒	US-11818	Martindale State Fishing Lake	IN	Cambridge City					
☒	US-9520	Woodland Trails State Wildlife Area	OH	Off of 127					
☒	US-9498	Rush Run Wildlife Area	OH			58	https://maps.app.goo.gl/GxSmAc7ZsptT4x		Halfway between Hamilton and Eaton
☐	US-8637	Deer Creek State Wildlife Area	OH	Washington Courthouse		77	https://maps.app.goo.gl/qw3v8jwkGfrAwtb38		
☒	US-1945	Deer Creek State Park	OH	Washington Courthouse		88	https://maps.app.goo.gl/tEHPOaZ3Dsc2JE		Beach



Activating – List of Parks in Greater Cincinnati

- ↵ US-0875 William Howard Taft National Historic Site
- ↵ US-1972 Little Miami State Park
- ↵ US-3810 Dr. Norman and Martha Adair Wildlife Management Area
- ↵ US-3779 Big Bone Lick State Historic Site
- ↵ US-9756 Decker Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-1948 East Fork State Park & US-8114 - East Fork State Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-1993 Stonelick State Park
- ↵ US-9492 Pater State Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-1959 Hueston Woods State Park & US-9413 Hueston Woods State Nature Preserve
- ↵ US-4572 Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
- ↵ US-8638 Indian Creek Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-9457 Della Gates & Edward C Bott Wildlife Preserve
- ↵ US-9402 Dean A Culberson State Nature Preserve
- ↵ US-9489 Oldaker State Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-1943 Cowan Lake
- ↵ US-9467 Grant Lake State Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-9411 Halls Creek Woods State Nature Preserve
- ↵ US-7849 Spring Valley State Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-9461 Fallsville State Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-9462 Fallsville South State Wildlife Area
- ↵ US-13539 Fernald National Preserve

Activating – Know Before You Go

- ▶ Parking – Use google maps with SATELITE layer
- ▶ Know the terrain
 - ▶ Where can I park
 - ▶ Space for antenna
 - ▶ Do I have to hike
 - ▶ Are there picnic tables or shelters
 - ▶ Trees or large fields
- ▶ Any fees for the park or using shelters
- ▶ Park hours and RULES



General Rules and Guidelines



- ▶ Must have a park number, US-, CA-, GB- (ISO-3166-2)
- ▶ Must be within the boundary of the park or within 100ft if it is a waterway or trail
- ▶ Must be on PUBLIC property and when park is open
- ▶ You can self spot
- ▶ Relays are prohibited
- ▶ Two-fers (park within a park)

General Rules and Guidelines

- ▶ Program is largely on the honor system
- ▶ Follow the Law
- ▶ Follow the Rules of the Park
- ▶ Follow the DX code of conduct
 - ▶ Listen, Listen, Listen
 - ▶ Always send your full call
 - ▶ Be thankful when you make contact
 - ▶ Respect fellow hams



What to Bring

- ▶ Radio Equipment – radio, mic, battery, headphones, key
- ▶ Feedline(s) & Antenna(s) and Antenna supports
- ▶ Antenna Analyzer
- ▶ Radio Manual
- ▶ Paper and Pen
- ▶ Paper Logs
- ▶ Laptop or Tablet and chargers (if using log software or app)
- ▶ Flyer & Handouts
- ▶ Water & Snacks
- ▶ Table & chair (s)
- ▶ Tent
- ▶ Bug spray & Sunscreen
- ▶ Headlamp
- ▶ Tools
- ▶ Popup Wagon
- ▶ SPARES



Radio Equipment

- ▶ Start simple
- ▶ Work and progress as you learn what works best for you
- ▶ Streamline setup and teardown time
- ▶ Have different options for different parks



Antennas

- ▶ EFHW – 40,20,15,10
- ▶ Vertical
- ▶ Vertical w/ elevated counterpoise
- ▶ Ham Stick
- ▶ Dipole
- ▶ Parking lot activation
 - ▶ Weights
 - ▶ Bean bags
 - ▶ 5 gal bucket
 - ▶ Drive on mast base



Set-up Self Spot

Exchange

SSB

- ▶ CQ POTA
- ▶ Acknowledge Calling Station
- ▶ Get Calling Stations State
- ▶ Signal Report is optional
- ▶ If it is a Park 2 Park – exchange park numbers

FT-8

- ▶ Same as normal FT-8
- ▶ Just use CQ POTA <callsign> <grid>

UTC	dB	DT	Freq	Message
200830	-5	0.1	1340 ~	CQ POTA KC0DBS EM48 U.
200915	Tx		953 ~	KC0DBS KO4ZHO FM05
200945	Tx		953 ~	KC0DBS KO4ZHO FM05
201000	1	0.2	796 ~	KO4ZHO KC0DBS +07
201000	-3	0.1	1780 ~	KO4ZHO KC0DBS +00
201015	Tx		953 ~	KC0DBS KO4ZHO R-03
201030	1	0.1	1780 ~	KO4ZHO KC0DBS RRR
201030	5	0.2	796 ~	KO4ZHO KC0DBS RR73
201045	Tx		953 ~	KC0DBS KO4ZHO 73
201100	1	0.2	796 ~	KF5SFJ KC0DBS -11
201100	3	0.1	1780 ~	KO4ZHO KC0DBS RRR
201116	Tx		953 ~	KC0DBS KO4ZHO 73
201130	3	0.1	1780 ~	KO4ZHO KC0DBS 73
201200	0	0.2	1780 ~	KF5SFJ KC0DBS -14
201230	-2	0.1	1779 ~	KF5SFJ KC0DBS -14

Multiple Operators

- ▶ Have a speaker or headphone splitter and extra headphones
- ▶ All operators should have POTA account
- ▶ First operator calls CQ & handles exchange
- ▶ “Please stand by for second op”
- ▶ Second op gives their call sign, acknowledges calling station and then “same report”



Club Activations

- ▶ Create a POTA account for the club
- ▶ Like a mini field day
- ▶ Each station uses club call
- ▶ Networking logging for multiple stations
- ▶ Unlike Multi-operator activation there is no “pass the mic”
- ▶ Each station spots themselves with club call plus /R01, R/02...
- ▶ One log is submitted for the activation



Logging

- ▶ 5 Mandatory Fields
 - ▶ CALL (callsign you receive)
 - ▶ QSO_DATE
 - ▶ TIME_ON
 - ▶ MODE
 - ▶ BAND
- ▶ Optional Fields
 - ▶ MY_SIG_INFO (special interest group)
 - ▶ SIG_INFO => calling station's park # when it is a P2P
 - ▶ STATION_CALLSIGN => club call sign when doing a club activation
 - ▶ OPERATOR => used for club activation
 - ▶ MY_STATE => state or province of activation when park spans multiple
- ▶ Export ADIF file with filename => callsign@park#-yyyymmdd

Paper Logs

- ▶ Requires logging to log software after the activation
- ▶ OR using the Manual Log Entry – NOT RECOMMENDED

Manual Log Entry

Search for Callsigns & Parks

SPOTS

ACTIVATIONS

DOCS

My Callsign
K8DOJ

Park Reference
Example: US-1234

Location

REQUEST SUPPORT

QSO Date (UTC)
2026-08-28

Band
20M

Mode
CW

Operator (optional)

Extra

Hour (UTC)
0

Minute
0

Callsign

State (recommended)

Park-to-Park (optional)
Example: US-1234

ADD ENTRY

#	Date/Time (UTC)	Callsign	State	Band	Mode	Operator	Details
No data available							

☐ My logs are correct and I understand that logs cannot be modified once uploaded

☐ My logs are for activations that conform to the Parks on the Air Rules and Code of Conduct

SUBMIT LOG

DOWNLOAD ADIF

This page is not intended for live logging! Once you leave this page your log entries will be gone forever!

Please make sure you submit or download your generated log before navigating away.

Tips for entering logs:

Logging Software and Apps

- ▶ HAMRS (Windows, mac, iOS & Android)
- ▶ Ham2K Polo (iOS and Android) – Highly recommended by others
- ▶ World Radio League
- ▶ N1MM+
- ▶ N3FJP
- ▶ SmartLogger – My preference

Uploading Log Files

► On-line Demo

 My Log Uploads

Search for Callsigns & Parks

 SPOTS

 ACTIVATIONS

 DOCS

 K8DOJ

Upload Activation Logs [REQUEST SUPPORT](#)

 Click here or drag and drop to upload ADIF logs from your activation

0 files (0 B in total)

All files must be compliant with the ADIF specification, see <https://adif.org>. Please refer to the [ADIF for POTA Technical Reference](#) for a list of required ADIF fields.

Need help? See the [Submitting Logs](#) section of the POTA Activator Reference or contact the support team by clicking the Request Support button.

Prefer to log on paper? [MANUAL LOG ENTRY](#) BETA

 Once your log is processed, it may take up to 24 hours for your logbook and stats to fully reflect your uploaded QSOs. Most awards are granted within a few days, but some awards may take a few weeks.

Thank you for being patient!

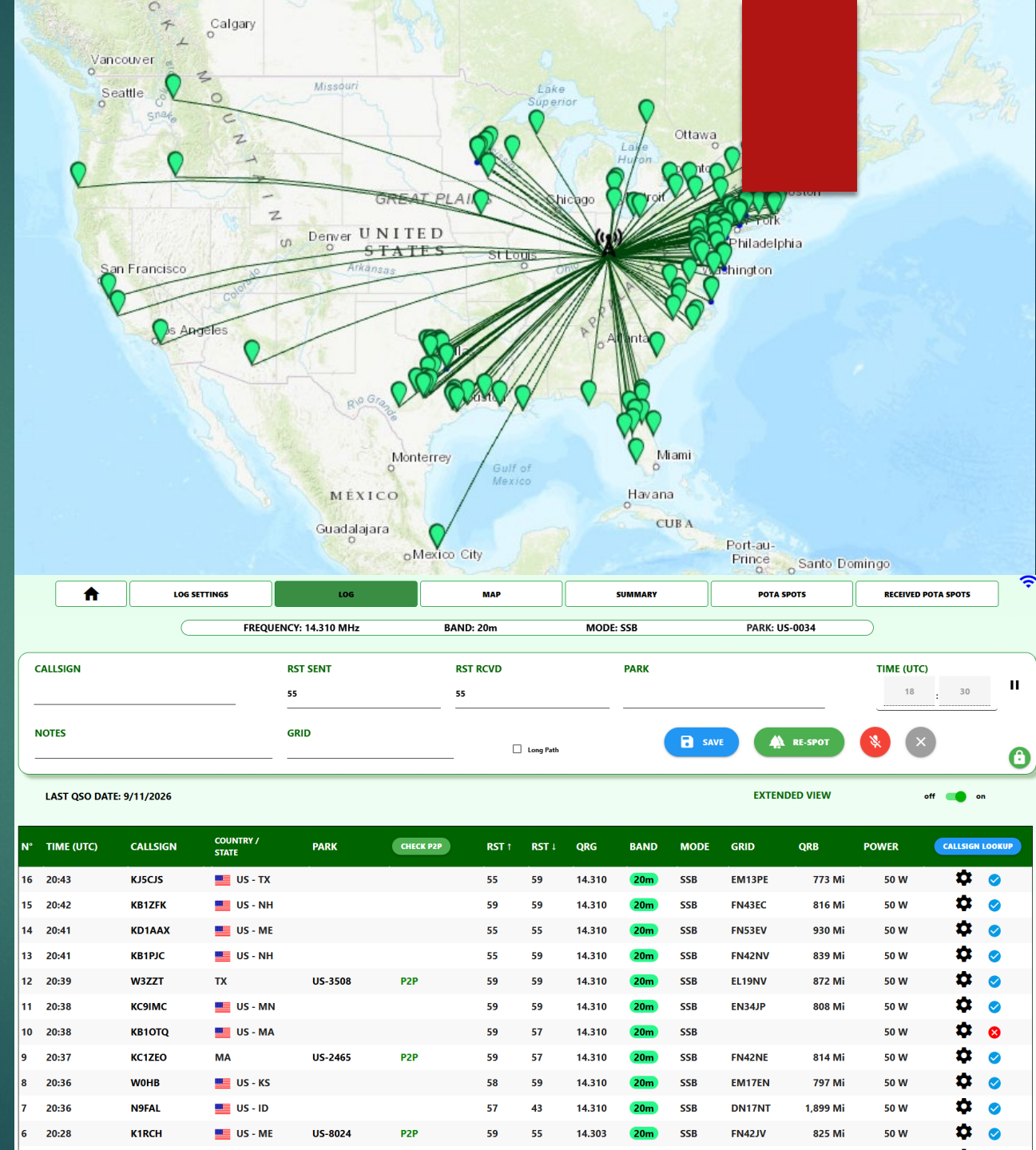
Uploaded Logs ☐ Show All

Status	Submitted ↓	Processed	Callsign	Park	First QSO	Last QSO	Log QSOs	Accepted QSOs	
Processed	2026-08-27 13:30	2026-08-27 13:30	K8DOJ	US-9498 Rush Run State Wildlife Area (US-OH)	2026-08-26 20:45	2026-08-26 21:36	28	27	▼
Processed	2026-08-27 13:30	2026-08-27 13:30	K8DOJ	US-11818 Martindale State Fishing Lake (US-IN)	2026-08-26 17:48	2026-08-26 18:43	26	26	▼
Processed	2026-08-22	2026-08-22	K8DOJ	US-8638 Indian Creek State Wildlife Area (US-	2026-08-22	2026-08-22	128	125	▼

[illegible]

Smart Logger

► <https://smartlogger.app/app/index.html>



Tips and Tricks

- ▶ Have contingency plans
- ▶ Make sure to have tools and spares
 - ▶ Cables
 - ▶ Batteries
 - ▶ Antenna options (mag mount and ham sticks)
- ▶ Know the band conditions before you go
- ▶ Check if there are QSO parties or other contests active
- ▶ Setup Log ahead of time
- ▶ Have cables to run off car battery/power
- ▶ Keep equipment organized – use zip lock bags, Velcro straps
- ▶ Start with lower power
- ▶ Dealing with pileups – take partial calls
- ▶ Cellphone coverage (or StarLink) for spotting and log software
- ▶ Avoid calling & SSTV frequencies (e.g. on 20m -> 14.195MHz, 14.300MHz & 14.230MHz)



Awards

Hunters

- ▶ Number of Parks Hunted
- ▶ Late shift contacts
- ▶ Early shift contacts
- ▶ WAS
- ▶ Worked all Provinces
- ▶ Entities Hunted

Activators

- ▶ Parks Activated
- ▶ # of Parks in a Single Day
- ▶ Park 2 Park
- ▶ States Activated
- ▶ Kilo Award

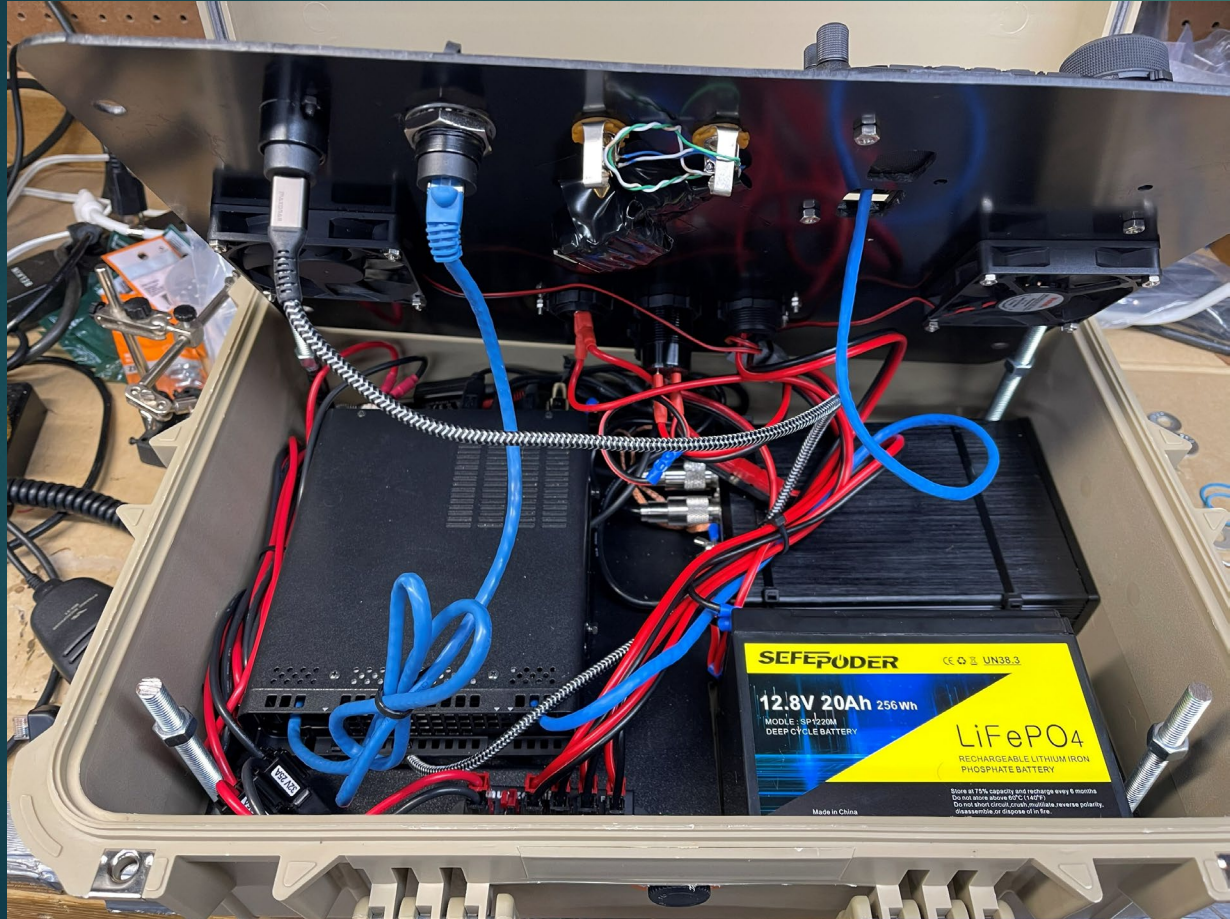


Questions



AUX Slides









ABOUT THE AMERICAN RADIO RELAY LEAGUE

From: <http://www.arrl.org/about-arrl>

"ARRL is the national association for Amateur Radio in the US. Founded in 1914 by Hiram Percy Maxim as The American Radio Relay League, ARRL is a noncommercial organization of radio amateurs. ARRL numbers within its ranks the vast majority of active radio amateurs in the nation and has a proud history of achievement as the standard-bearer in amateur affairs. ARRL's underpinnings as Amateur Radio's witness, partner and forum are defined by five pillars: Public Service, Advocacy, Education, Technology, and Membership. "

The ARRL promotes and provides support to amateur radio operators across the United States.

There are Amateur Radio clubs across the country that are affiliated with the ARRL. These clubs provide support to their membership and often provide training classes to help bring new people into the amateur radio family.



LOW POWER PORTABLE HAM RADIO

What is Amateur Radio?

There are over 730,000 Amateur Radio operators in the US, licensed by the Federal Communications Commission. They are trained in communications techniques and basic electronics theory.

During emergencies and other times of need, Amateur Radio operators have provided worldwide public service. Amateur Radio has been recognized by FEMA and the American Red Cross as elements of the critical communications network needed during natural disasters and other emergencies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

Parks On The Air Home Page:
<https://parksontheair.com>

American Radio Relay League Home Page:
<http://www.arrl.org>

Parks On The Air

PORTABLE AMATEUR RADIO



Cherry Plain State Park, NY

Operating a portable amateur radio station from a park pavilion can afford fantastic views! It also provides an opportunity to expose the public to the amateur radio service.





LOG

MAP

SUMMARY

POTA SPOTS

RECEIVED POTA SPOTS



🏠 LOG SETTINGS LOG MAP SUMMARY POTA SPOTS RECEIVED POTA SPOTS										
BAND MODE PROGRAM SORT BY QRT LOGGED										
20m SSB ALL Frequency Hide ☒ Show Hide ☒ Show										
TIME (UTC)	CALLSIGN	QRG	MODE	THEIR PARK	PARK NAME	LOCATION	SPOTTER	COMMENTS	COPY TO LOG	
18:43	K4PYA	14.228	SSB	US-3321 ★	Ortonville State Recreation Area	US-MI	KC7UXM	W	📄	
18:19	WV1W	14.246	SSB	US-8395 ★	Cape Cod Rail Trail State Trail	US-MA	WV1W	Anyone else?	📄	
18:45	M7KOD	14.257	SSB	GB-1012 ★	Great Orme Country Park	GB-WLS	M7KOD		📄	
18:33	KI5OEZ	14.257	SSB	US-0548	Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge	US-TX	KC7UXM	W	📄	
18:42	KK7RPI	14.257	SSB	US-3255 ★	Rasar State Park	US-WA	KK7RPI	QRV	📄	
18:35	W4SFD	QRT 14.263	SSB	US-7610 ★	Old Hickory Wildlife Management Area	US-TN	W4SFD	QRT THANKS HUNTERS!	📄	
18:44	N3ZB	14.266	SSB	US-4504 ★	Helena - Lewis and Clark National Forest	US-MT	N3ZB	QRV 2-fer: US-4504 US-4558	📄	
18:37	KO4ISH	14.278	SSB	US-0642 ★	Natchez Trace Parkway National Parkway	US-AL,US-MS,US-TN	KC7UXM	W	📄	
18:32	KC1AEO	QRT 14.285	SSB	US-2412 ★	Two Lights State Park	US-ME	KC1AEO	QRT	📄	
18:37	AC1JS	14.294	SSB	US-2389 ★	Fort Point State Park	US-ME	AC1JS	Going to try 17m	📄	
18:44	KE0DS	14.305	SSB	US-7146 ★	Red River State Recreation Area	US-MN	WF5TV		📄	
18:20	KF8CXC	QRT 14.307	SSB	US-3518 ★	Middle Bass Island State Park	US-OH	KF8CXC	[via SOTAmat.com] qrt	📄	
18:39	VE3PTA	QRT 14.310	SSB	CA-6003 ★	Great Lakes Waterfront Trail Recreation Site	CA-ON	VE3PTA	QRT Seems band just died Steven VE3PTA	📄	
18:44	KF4TY	14.310	SSB	US-9893 ★	Tunnel Hill State Trail	US-IL	KC7UXM	58 ELP WTX	📄	
18:41	VE3DPZ	14.316	SSB	CA-6017 ★	Mountjoy Historical Conservation Area	CA-ON	KJ5QXO	73 MS	📄	
18:44	NS6X	14.317	SSB	US-13260 ★	Angel Lake Road Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	US-NV	F5PYI	[51] thanks	📄	



LOG SETTINGS

LOG

MAP

SUMMARY

POTA SPOTS

RECEIVED POTA SPOTS

FREQUENCY: 14.274 MHz

BAND: 20m

MODE: SSB

PARK: US-9498



CALLSIGN

RST SENT

RST RCVD

PARK

TIME (UTC)

18

44



NOTES

GRID

☐ Long Path



SAVE



RE-SPOT



LAST QSO DATE: 8/25/2026

EXTENDED VIEW

off ☒ on

N°	TIME (UTC)	CALLSIGN	COUNTRY / STATE	PARK	CHECK P2P	RST ↑	RST ↓	QRG	BAND	MODE	GRID	QRB	POWER	CALLSIGN LOOKUP
28	21:36	KI8H	NJ	US-8042	P2P	57	55	14.3280	20m	SSB	FM29LE	824 Km	50 W	
27	21:30	K0JCE	US - MN	CA-6025	P2P	59	59	14.2630	20m	SSB	EN09VI	1,524 Km	50 W	
26	21:30	KF0ZCL	US - MN	CA-6025	P2P	59	59	14.2630	20m	SSB	EN09VI	1,524 Km	50 W	
25	21:27	K9LOE	US - IL	US-4073	P2P	59	59	14.2530	20m	SSB	EL49SK	1,250 Km	50 W	
24	21:14	EB1DJ	ES			59	59	14.274	20m	SSB			50 W	
23	21:03	WW5AT	US - TX			57	59	14.274	20m	SSB			50 W	
22	21:02	KC1WZK	US - NH			54	57	14.274	20m	SSB	FN43GM	1,177 Km	50 W	
21	21:01	N0DRX	US - MN			57	59	14.274	20m	SSB	EN35OB	904 Km	50 W	
20	21:00	W0SEB	US - ND		DUPE	57	56	14.274	20m	SSB	DN84JA	1,612 Km	50 W	
19	20:59	N0TTZ	US - WY			57	56	14.274	20m	SSB	DN71NE	1,720 Km	50 W	
18	20:57	W0SEB	US - ND		DUPE	57	53	14.274	20m	SSB	DN84JA	1,612 Km	50 W	
17	20:57	WA1ULW	US - FL			55	54	14.274	20m	SSB	EL96UF	1,541 Km	50 W	

