

# Getting Started in Parks on the Air—

- From the Perspective  
of a New Ham

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October 8, 2026





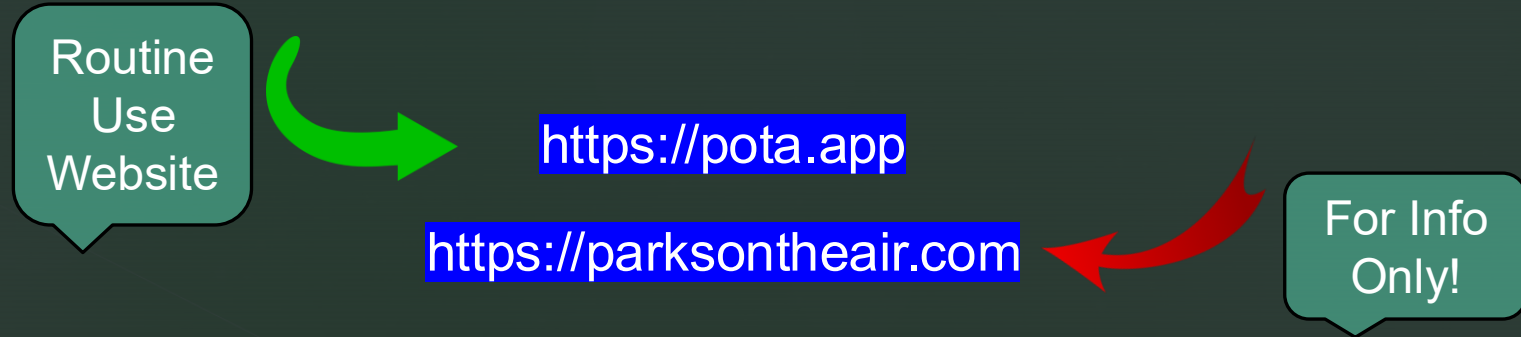
# What Is POTA?

- An International program promoting portable amateur radio operations in parks and protected areas
- Encourages outdoor activity, radio skills, and community engagement
- Two main roles: Activators (operate from parks) and Hunters (contact activators)

# Why I Enjoy POTA & Why You Will Too!

- Great excuse to find & explore new parks
- Excellent way to prepare for emergency ops
- Flexible: operate from home, a picnic table, your vehicle or a backpack portable setup
- Great for experimenting with antennas and QRP
- Friendly, active community
- Awards and achievements keep it fun and Challenging

# The POTA Website



- Map (Park Directory)
- Spots page
- Awards
- Log submission
- Documents



Docs Home

Rules

Code of Conduct

Activator Reference

Hunter Guide

CW Guide

Digital Modes Guide

Events

Awards

Video Resources

Support

Resources and Documents

Announcements



**i** Looking for program rules, activator/hunter guides? Look for their dedicated pages via the menu!

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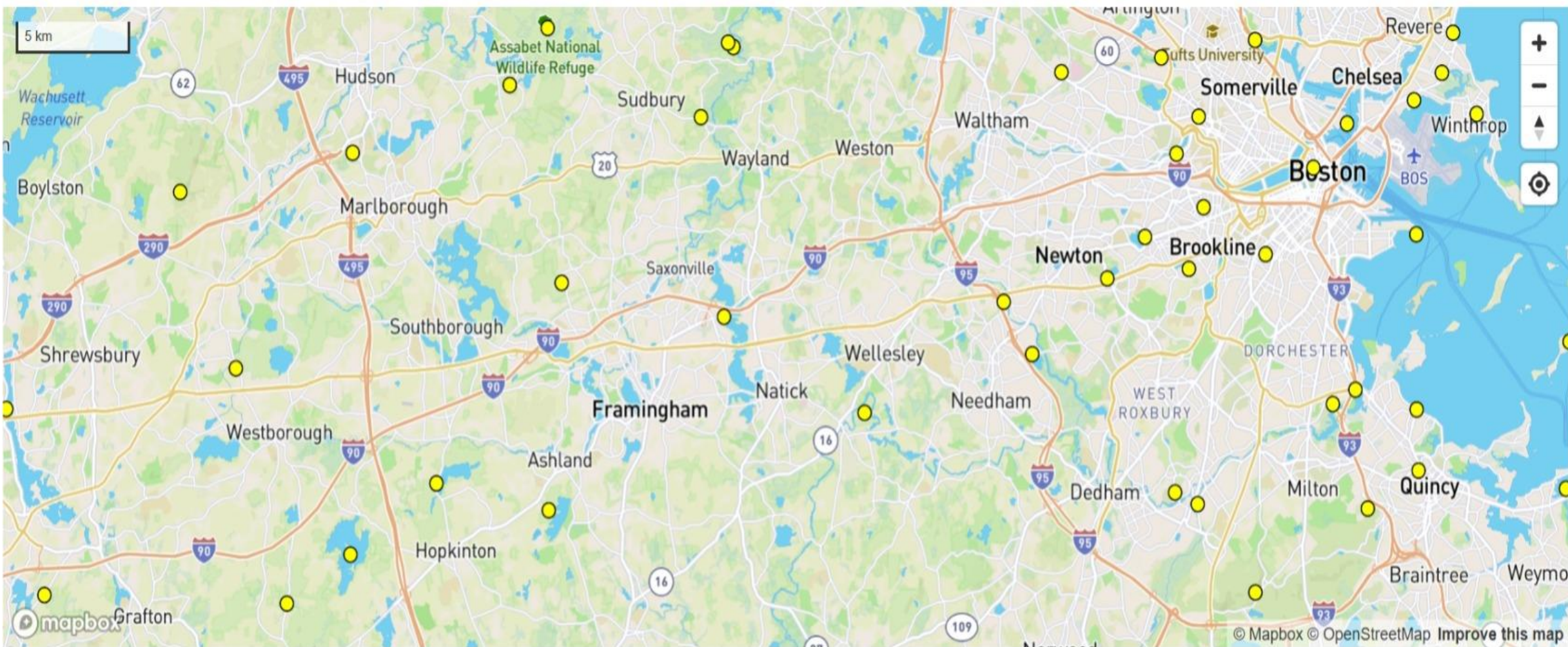
**All your  
Questions  
Answered  
Here!**

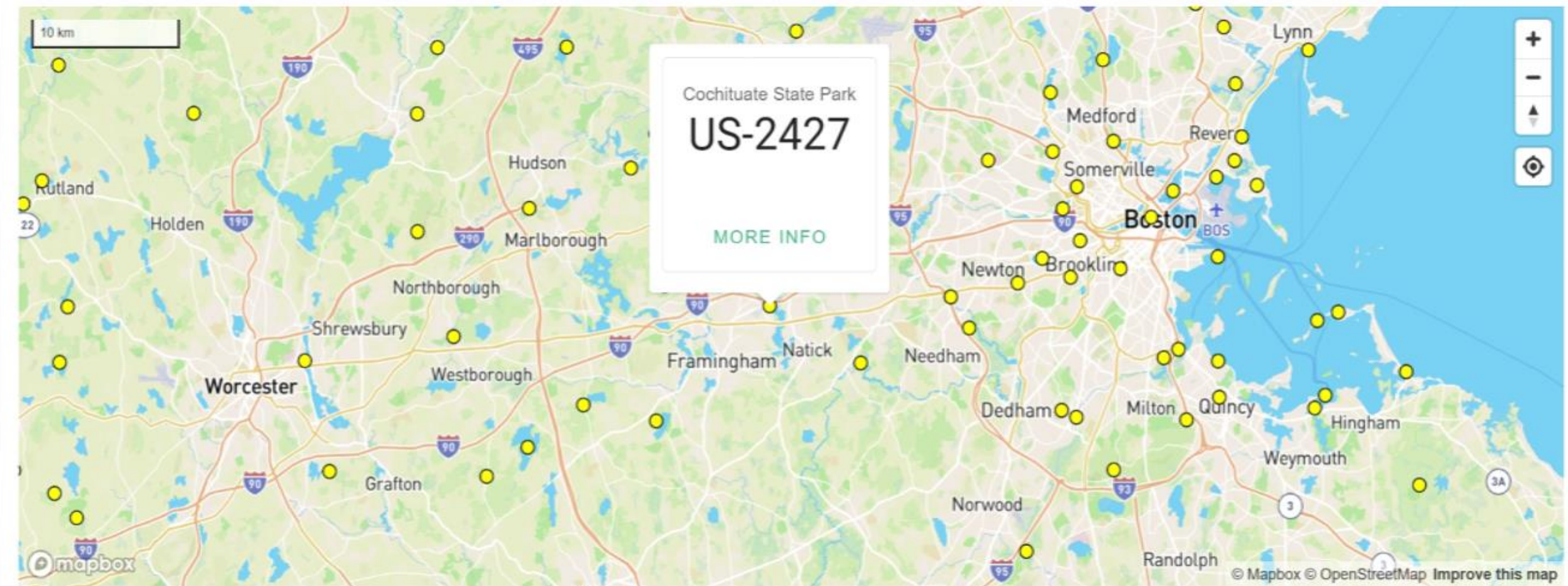
## Getting Started with POTA

Parks on the Air® (POTA) started in early 2017 when the ARRL's National Parks on the Air special event ended. A group of volunteers wanted to continue the fun beyond the one-year event, and thus, POTA was born.

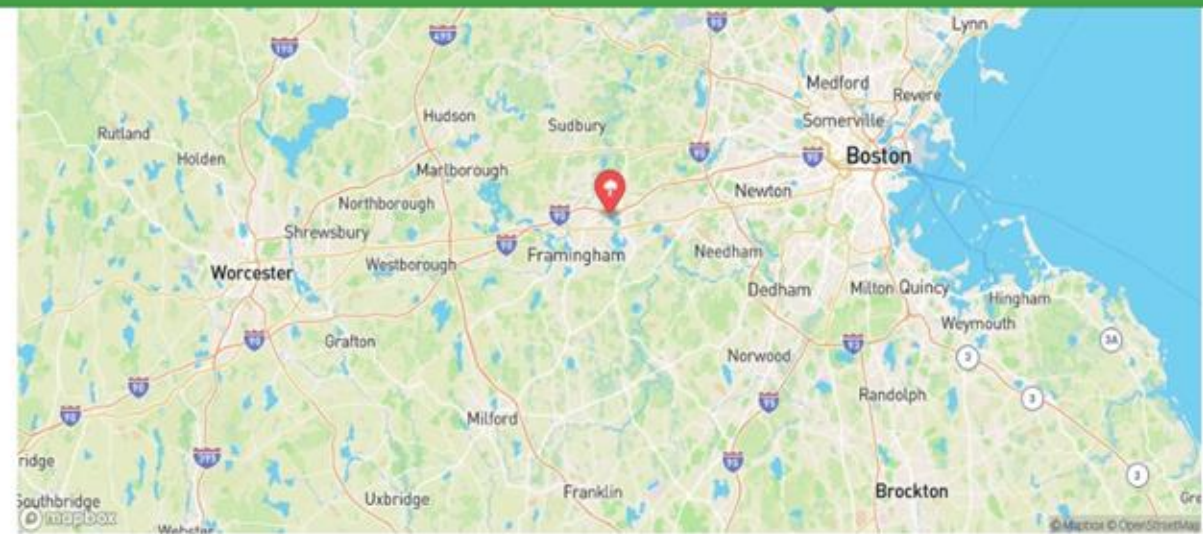
# Understanding Park References

- POTA maintains a list of qualifying parks
- Each park has a unique reference number (e.g., US-1234)
- Includes national, state, and some local parks
- Use the POTA website to search for parks near you





|                          |                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reference:               | US-2427                                                                                                                 |
| Entity:                  | United States of America                                                                                                |
| Location(s):             | US-MA                                                                                                                   |
| Latitude / Longitude:    | 42.309, -71.3775 (FN42hh)                                                                                               |
| Early Shift Award Times: | 7:00 UTC to 13:00 UTC                                                                                                   |
| Late Shift Award Times:  | 23:00 UTC to 7:00 UTC                                                                                                   |
| Website:                 | <a href="https://www.mass.gov/locations/cochituate-state-park">https://www.mass.gov/locations/cochituate-state-park</a> |
| Access Methods:          | <div>Automobile</div> <div>Foot</div>                                                                                   |
| Activation Methods:      | <div>Automobile</div> <div>Pedestrian</div>                                                                             |
| Is Active?               | ACTIVE                                                                                                                  |
| First Activation:        |  KC1CBQ on 2018-11-04                |



## Activations

| Date       | Callsign                                                                                     | CW | Data | Phone | Total QSOs |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|-------|------------|
| 2026-03-13 |  KC1ACT | 0  | 60   | 0     | 60         |
| 2026-03-11 |  KC1WVQ | 0  | 0    | 65    | 65         |
| 2026-03-09 |  KC1ACT | 0  | 26   | 0     | 26         |
| 2026-03-08 |  W1VEG  | 0  | 0    | 15    | 15         |

# Activators vs. Hunters

## Activators

- Operate from inside the park boundaries
- Need a minimum of 10 contacts for a valid activation
- Must follow park rules
- Must submit a log

## Hunters

- Contact activators from anywhere
- No minimum contact requirement
- Great for beginners
- No log required

# What You Need to Start (Hunters)

- Any home or mobile station
- Optional logging software
- POTA spotting page
- Basic VHF/HF skills



## Active Spots

*Data will refresh in 13 seconds.*

At a park now?

ADD SPOT

Band: All 102 ▼

Mode: All 102 ▼

Program: All 102 ▼

QRT: Show 102 ▼

Hunted: Show 102 ▼

Sort: Time ▼

 N7Y @ US-0177



 US-0177 Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

 US-AZ

18084.0 kHz (CW)

 K1RA-4-#

 RBN 16 dB 20 WPM via K1RA-4-#

 Last heard 45 sec ago at 19:04 UTC

RE-SPOT  16

 N2NWK @ US-0928



US-0928 Fort McHenry National Monument

US-MD

 21348 kHz

 SSR

🕒 Last heard 45 sec ago at 19:04 UTC

RE-SPOT 

29

K0ACP @ US-6632



 US-6632 Bluff Creek / US-10 / M-18 Floodings  
Wildlife Management Area

 US-M

10115.0 kHz (CW)

 WZ71-#

 RBN 4 dB 22 WPM via WZ7I-#

🕒 Last heard 45 sec ago at 19:04 UTC

RE-SPOT 



3:56

WRL

Search Callsign

🕒 March 15, 2026 | 19:56:29 z

Band Conditions

Band Plan

LOGBOOKS

+ New Logbook

KC1WVQ@US-2427

#

99

Created: 03/04/2026

KC1WVQ - ARRL  
January VHF Log

#

36

Created: 01/11/2026

KC1WVQ - Winter  
Field Day 2026 Log

#

107

Created: 01/11/2026

Logbooks

Activities

Community

Profile

3:57

WRL

Search Callsign

🕒 March 15, 2026 | 19:57:09 z

| Band    | Day  | Night |
|---------|------|-------|
| 80m-40m | Fair | Good  |
| 30m-20m | Good | Good  |
| 17m-15m | Fair | Fair  |
| 12m-10m | Poor | Poor  |

Signal Noise: S1-S2  
Sunspot Number: 77

A

K

SFI

40

2

112

Close

Created: 01/11/2026

Logbooks

Activities

Community

Profile

3:58

←

KC1WVQ-1

Log

Map

Spots

Stats

Band

Mode

Frequency

20

SSB

Frequency

Data Sources

POTA

Spots will refresh in: 54 seconds

Refresh

14.2480

20m / SSB

POTA

28

K8BSR/15

at US-10161

minut...

Rolling Fork...

14.2670

20m / SSB

POTA

8

WW8L

at US-11926

minut...

Lon Hagler...

14.2680

20m / SSB

POTA

a

AE2NY

at US-9871

minut...

Waterlo o Stat...

14.2690

20m / SSB

POTA

a

KF4TY

at US-12361

minut...

Scott's Gulf W...

14.2710

a

Logbooks

Activities

Community

Profile

# What You Need to Start (Activators)

- Portable radio (QRP - 100W+)
- FT-891 IC-705 G-90 FTX-1 QRP Labs
- Battery or power source
- Portable antenna (EFHW, vertical, dipole, Mobile)
- Logging method (paper, app, laptop)
- Comfort items: chair, shade, water





(tr)uSDX

PA

truSDX> -104dBm  
A 7.030.00 USB R  
4k0

Audio

DL2MAN / PE1NNZ

Mic/Key

Menu

Enter

PTT





















# Choosing a Park

- Use POTA map
- Check access, hours, and parking
- Look for open antenna space
- Consider cell coverage for self-spotting









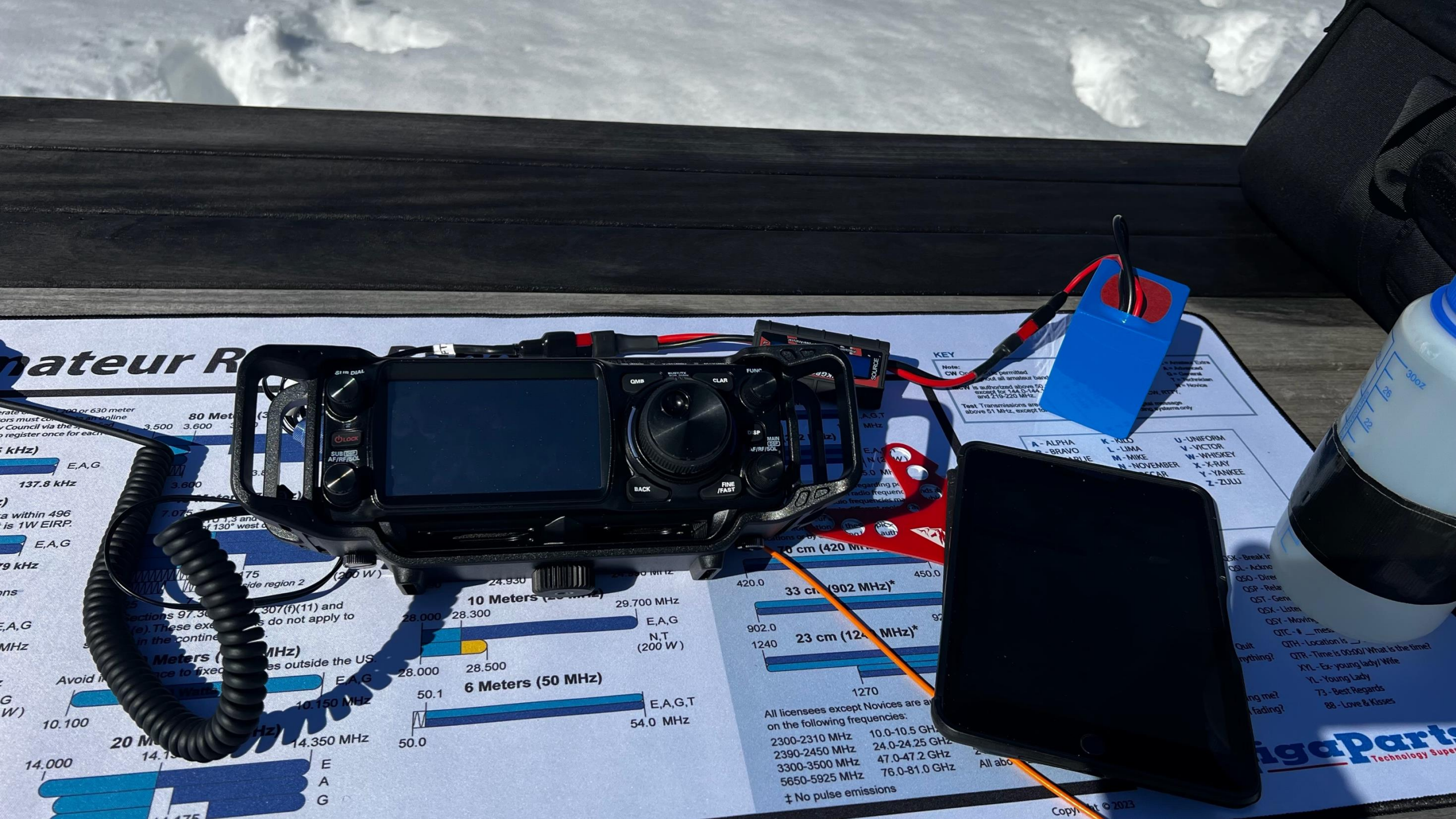


# Setting Up Your Station

- Keep it simple
- Test SWR before calling CQ
- Secure wires and stakes
- Respect other park visitors











9:56 PM Wed Mar 25

Kc1wvq@us2427

Log Map Spots Stats

March 25, 2026

|     |       |        |     |          |       |
|-----|-------|--------|-----|----------|-------|
| 27. | 23:34 | 14.235 | SSB | @ NWLM   | 59 59 |
| 28. | 23:35 | 14.235 | SSB | @ KESEUC | 59 59 |
| 29. | 23:30 | 14.235 | SSB | @ AFEWD  | 59 59 |
| 24. | 23:29 | 14.235 | SSB | @ KDOM   | 59 59 |
| 23. | 23:27 | 14.235 | SSB | @ W4HDR  | 59 59 |
| 22. | 23:25 | 14.235 | SSB | @ KX459U | 59 59 |
| 21. | 23:23 | 14.235 | SSB | @ HJ2JN  | 59 59 |
| 20. | 23:22 | 14.235 | SSB | @ KB97GN | 59 59 |

Notes

Enter note

23:36:07 UTC 14.235 1 558 @ Their Park 59 Power 59 Notes

| Call    | Send | Recv | State |
|---------|------|------|-------|
| Callign | 59   | 59   | State |





# Making Contacts

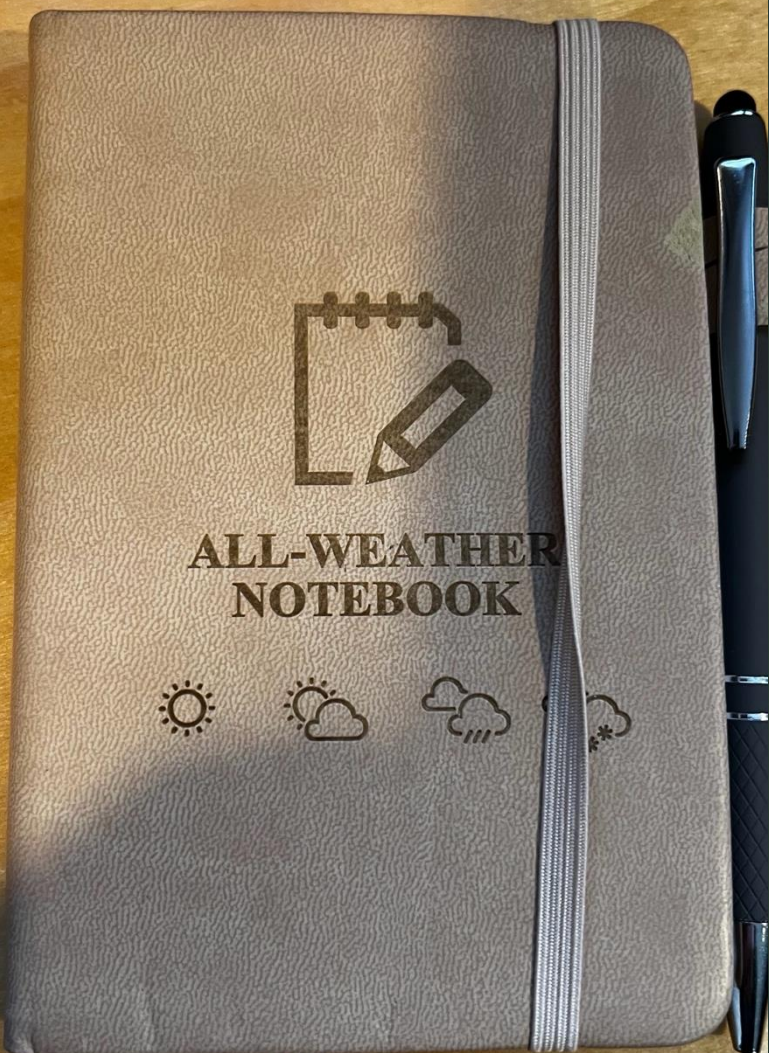
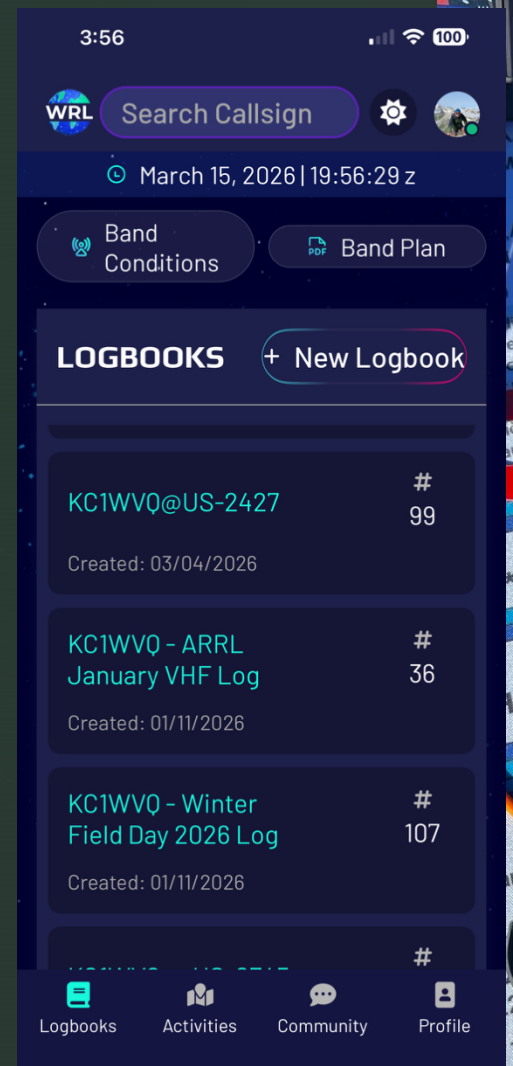
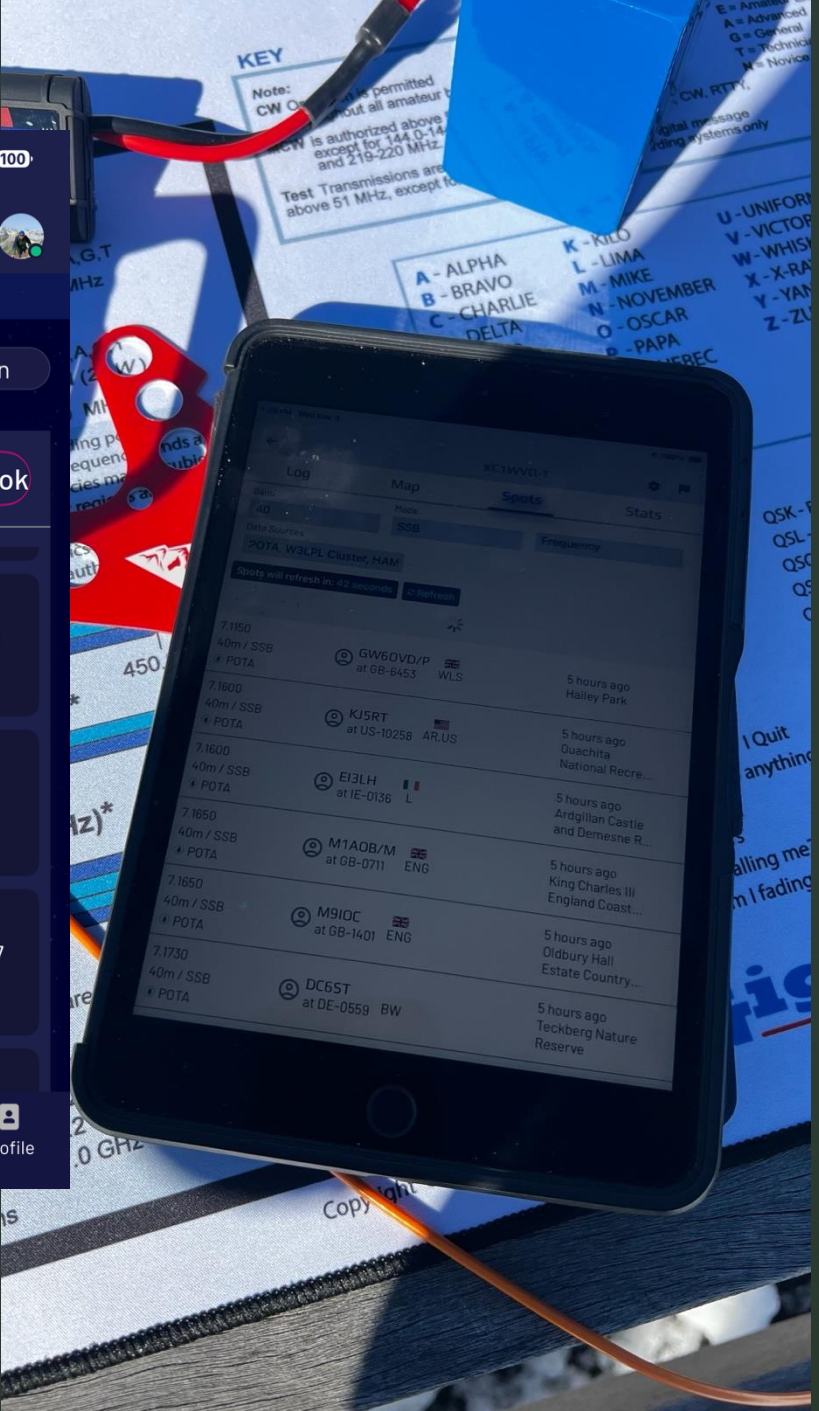
- Calling CQ
- “CQ CQ CQ, CQ POTA, this is [CALLSIGN], from US-1234 in Massachusetts calling CQ Parks on the Air and Listening
- Keep exchanges simple
  - (if you want to)*
- Hunting
- Use the spots page
- Listen first
- Be patient during pileups



# Logging Your Activation

- Activators must submit logs
- ADIF format preferred
- Include park reference and UTC times
- Hunters don't submit logs — activators upload them





My Log Uploads

https://pota.app/#/user/logs

My Log Uploads

Search for Callsigns & Parks

SPOTS

ACTIVATIONS

DOCS

KC1WVQ

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<sup>BETA</sup>](#)

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

Search

# Awards & Achievements

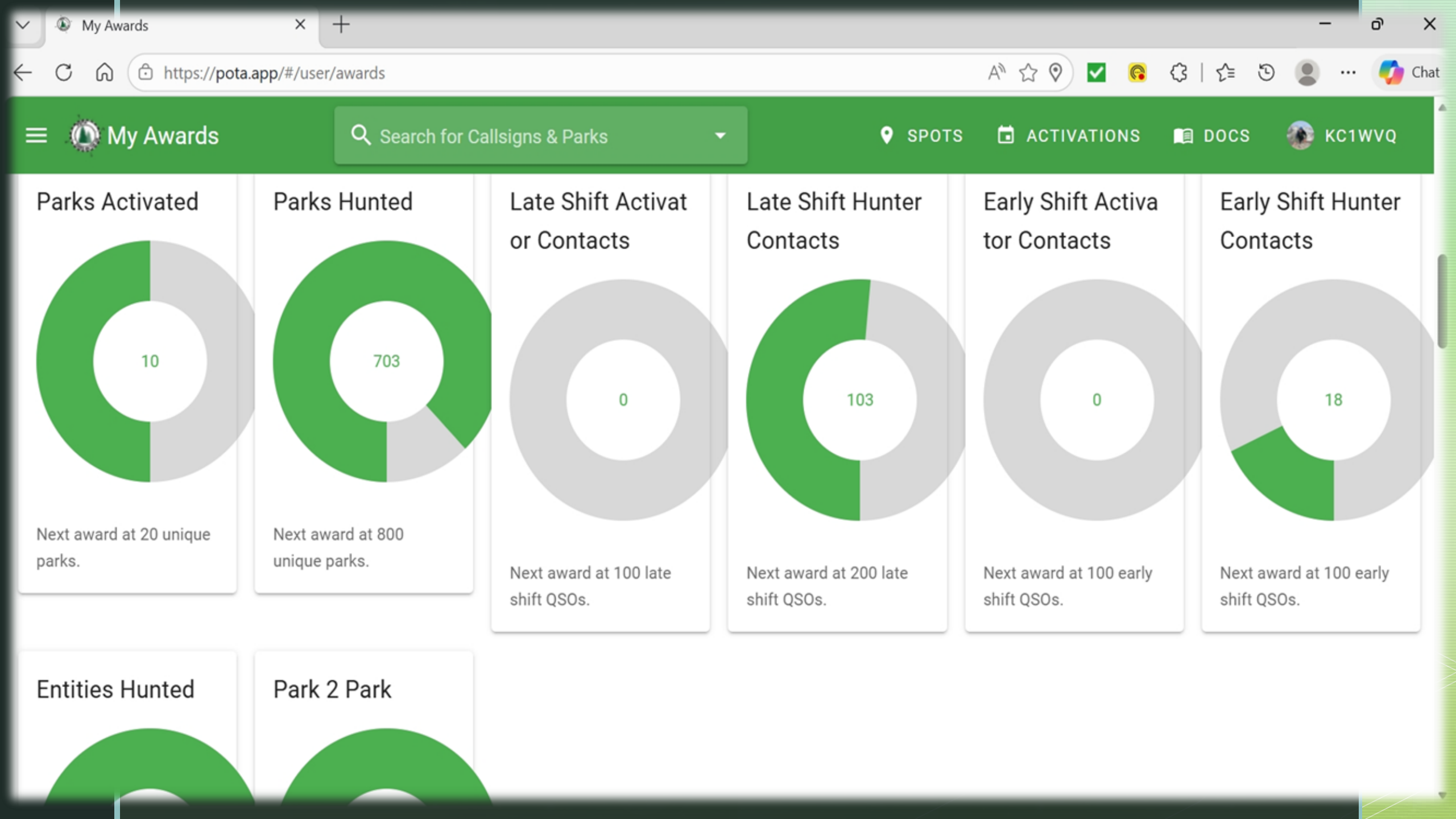
Challenge yourself to try new things

- Hunter and Activator awards
- Park-to-Park (P2P)
- Repeat activations
- Kilo awards (1,000 contacts from a park)
- Seasonal challenges

Earned Awards

Search

| Date First Granted | Award Name              | Description                                       | Badge | Endorsements | Repeat/Kilo Reference | Park Name                                    | Operator | Rove Date | Additional Details |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------|
| 2026-03-12 11:03   | Late Shift Hunter       | Making 100 QSOs as a hunter during the Late Shift | 100   |              |                       |                                              |          |           |                    |
| 2026-03-12 04:02   | Wiggins Acalypha Hunter | Working 700 different units                       |       | PHONE        |                       |                                              |          |           |                    |
| 2026-03-09 22:05   | Bronze Activator        | Working from 10 different units                   |       | PHONE        |                       |                                              |          |           |                    |
| 2026-02-22 00:58   | Texas Wild Rice Hunter  | Working 600 different units                       |       | PHONE        |                       |                                              |          |           |                    |
| 2026-02-19 03:07   | Oasis Hunter            | Worked a single entity 20 times                   |       |              | US-6927               | Nantahala State Game Land                    |          |           |                    |
| 2026-02-19 03:07   | Oasis Hunter            | Worked a single entity 20 times                   |       |              | US-4581               | Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail |          |           |                    |
| 2026-02-19 03:07   | Oasis Hunter            | Worked a single entity 20 times                   |       |              | US-4509               | Nantahala National Forest                    |          |           |                    |
| 2026-02-           | Oasis Hunter            | Worked a single entity 20                         |       |              | US-3791               | Trail of Tears National Historic             |          |           |                    |





## Sapphire Hunter



## Arizona Agave Hunter



Enrubio Hunter



Ouachita Mountain  
Goldenrod Hunter



Stenogyne Kanehoana  
Hunter



## Howells Spectacular Thelypody Hunter



## Texas Wild Rice Hunter



## Wiggins Acalypha Hunter



## Oasis Hunter



## Park to Park



### Operator to Operator



## Support Your Parks Activator



## Support Your Parks



## New Years Activator



## New Years Hunter



DX Hunter



## Rover Warthog



## Late Shift Hunter



# Safety & Etiquette



- Follow all park rules
- Go with a friend or let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return
- Keep wires visible
- Stay hydrated
- Leave no trace (If you pack it in, pack it out and leave the park cleaner than when you arrived)
- Be courteous on the air and in the Park (Be an ambassador for Ham Radio)





# ABR Industries High Visibility Cable Assemblies



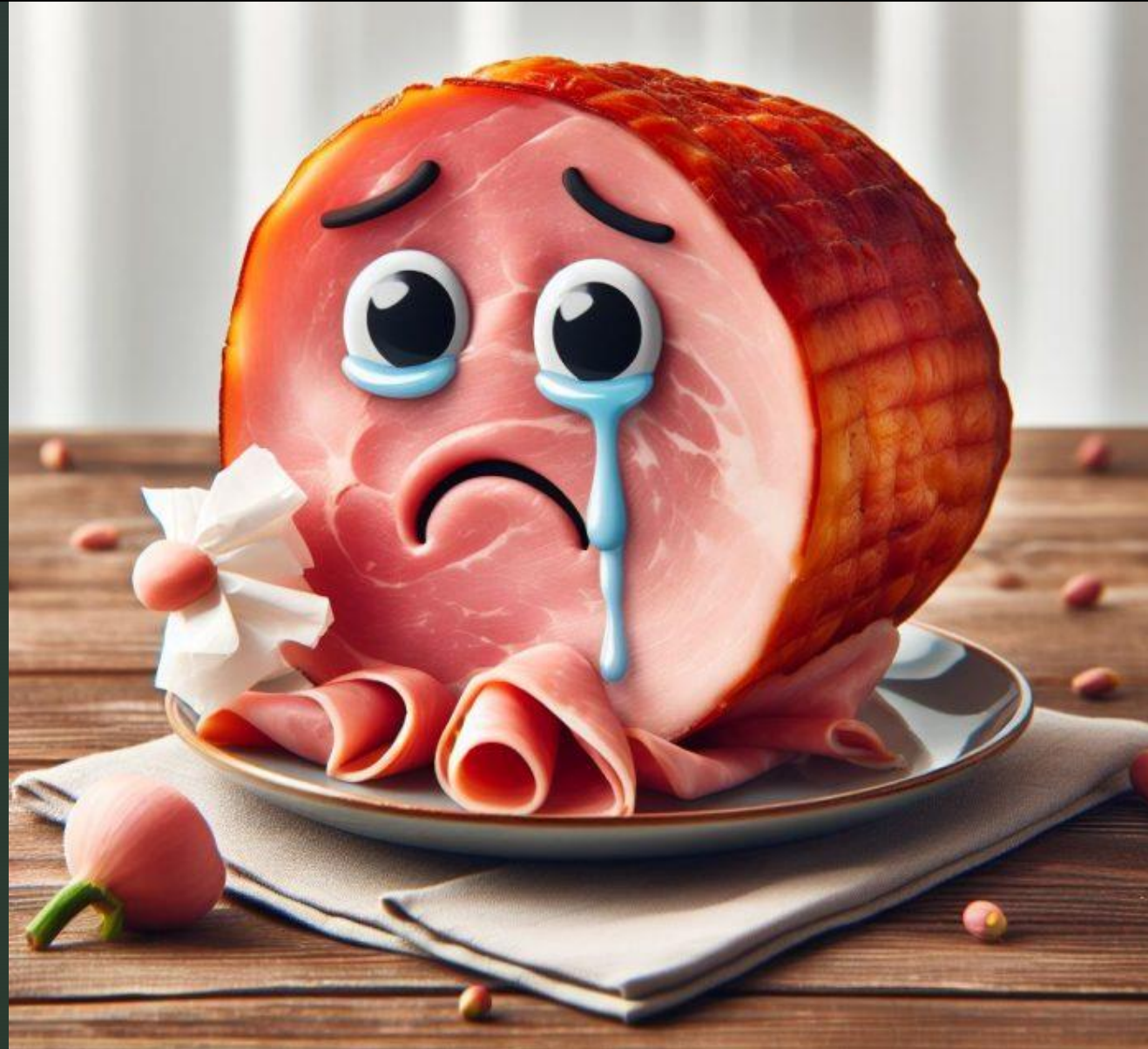


JELTELEON™  
ANTENNA  
YELLOW  
COUNTERPOISE  
KIT



Salmon

# Don't Be The Sad Ham!



# Tips for Activators

- Use a checklist so you don't forget items
- Use Contests to your advantage (2m, 70cm, 6m, DX)
- Use brightly colored coax and radials
- Bring a notebook and pen (for when logging software fails)
- Bring water, snacks, bug spray, and sunscreen as needed
- Bring a folding closed cell sitting pad
- Bring a table mat for gear protection
- Dress appropriately for the conditions (Layers) (Hat)
- Have an alternate plan of action (POTA PACE)
- Check the weather
- Keep basic First Aid, headlamp and Tool kit with you (coax adapters)
- Have fun and be positive!













# Wrap-Up & Q&A

