

# CHEROKEE AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

A scenic view of rolling green mountains under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, there are clusters of purple flowers, likely rhododendrons, on a hillside. The mountains recede into the distance, creating a sense of depth and tranquility.

Parks on the Air - from Beginner to EXTREME



# Parks on the Air from Beginner to EXTREME

Chad Cone (KY4KP)  
Jason Turnage (KO4NDP)  
April 13, 2024



# Let's Discuss

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- What is a POTA
  - Using the Site
  - Awards
  - Logging
- How to get started Hunting
- How to get started Activating
- EXTREME POTA
  - Multi-ops
  - INSANE Rove Planning
  - Speedy Setups
  - Spotting Off-Grid



## What is POTA

- A ham radio activity
  - It is NOT a contest
  - It is NOT an event
  - No points, not competing with anyone, it's just fun
  - No time blocks, no days/weekends it's going on, almost always POTA activity going on
- "Activators" work stations from inside a park
  - Earn tiered awards for "activating" a park
- "Hunters" hunt activators - Earn tiered awards for "hunting" folks activating a park

Active Spots *Data will refresh in 9 seconds.* ||

At a park now? [ADD SPOT](#)

Band: All 33 Mode: SSB 10 Program: All 33 QRT: Hide 32 Hunted: Hide 33 Sort: Time

W3JPH @ K-1384

K-1384 Memorial Lake State Park

US-PA

14343 kHz

W5NXX

No spot information

Last heard 27 sec ago at 14:19 UTC

[RE-SPOT](#) 3

K1NAS @ K-1721

K-1721 Stratton Brook State Park

US-CT

14230 kHz

K1NAS

Lots of interference just popped up... finding a new freq

Last heard 1 min ago at 14:18 UTC

[RE-SPOT](#) 3

WA3TVH @ K-1330

K-1330 Beltzville State Park

US-PA

7210 kHz

KC3TFW

57 PA

Last heard 1 min ago at 14:18 UTC

[RE-SPOT](#) 4



**Band:** All 33 ▼

All	33
40m	7
30m	3
20m	19
17m	3
15m	1

**Band:** All 33 ▼ **Mode:** SSB 10 ▼ **Progr**

VA3RJS @

VE-0146 Bas	33
CA-ON	10
18120 kHz	11
VA3RJS	1
Cq	1
Last heard 10	10
	13

## Earned Awards

🔍 Search

Date First Granted	Award Name	Description	Badge	Endorsements	Repeat/Kilo Reference	Park Name	Operator	Rove Date	Additional Details
2024-01-02 17:20	New Years Activator	Making contacts as an activator in the first week of the year		2024 🗓️					
2024-01-01 18:22	New Years Hunter	Making contacts as a hunter in the first week of the year		2024 🗓️					
2023-12-01 20:17	Worked All States 🗓️	Working 50 states / Dist of Columbia							
2023-11-19 03:51	Diamond Activator 🗓️	Working from 50 different units		20M					
2023-11-15 16:06	Texas Wild Rice Hunter 🗓️	Working 600 different units							
2023-10-07 21:32	DX Hunter 🗓️	Hunting 5 different DX Entities	5						
2023-10-01 15:53	Platinum Activator 🗓️	Working from 40 different units		20M					
2023-09-30 00:00	Rover Ostrich 🗓️	Activating 20 references in a single UTC day						2023-09-30	2023-09-30
2023-09-03 03:29	Early Shift Activator 🗓️	Making 100 QSOs as an activator during the Early Shift	200						
2023-09-03 03:29	Gold Activator 🗓️	Working from 30 different units		20M, CW, PHONE					

Rows per page: 10 ▾ 1-10 of 30 < >



# Enrubio



That  
**Jason Turnage**  
**KO4NDP**

has submitted proof of working  
**200** unique reference areas  
in the Parks on the Air program,  
this certificate is hereby  
presented in recognition of this  
outstanding achievement.

**200**

*Hunter Award*

Jason Johnston, W3AAX, POTA Coordinator

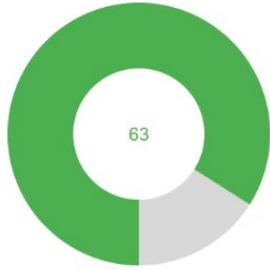
06/08/2022

Date

Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services via Wiki Commons

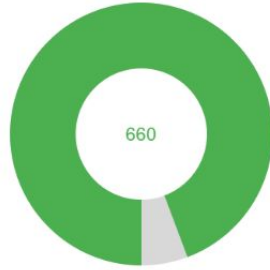


Parks Activated



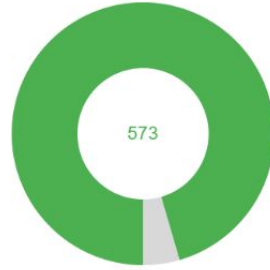
Next award at 75 unique parks.

Parks Hunted



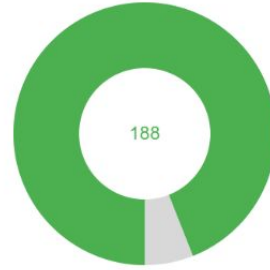
Next award at 700 unique parks.

Late Shift Activator Contacts



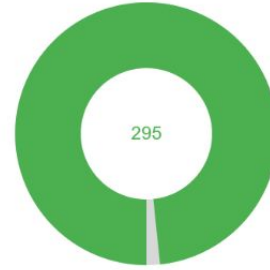
Next award at 600 late shift QSOs.

Late Shift Hunter Contacts



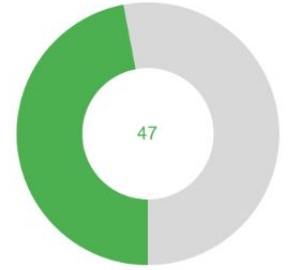
Next award at 200 late shift QSOs.

Early Shift Activator Contacts



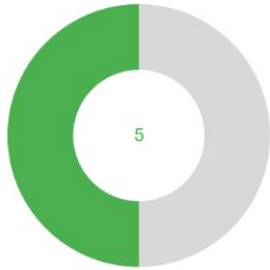
Next award at 300 early shift QSOs.

Early Shift Hunter Contacts



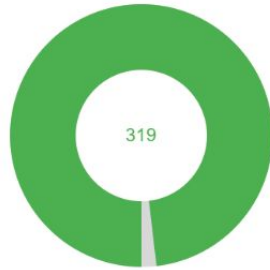
Next award at 100 early shift QSOs.

Entities Hunted



Next award at 10 unique entities.

Park 2 Park



Next award at 325 park-to-park QSOs.

Activated US States

AK	AL	AR	AZ	CA	CO	CT	DC	DE	FL	GA	HI	IA	ID	IL	IN	KS	KY	LA
MA	MD	ME	MI	MN	MO	MS	MT	NC	ND	NE	NH	NJ	NM	NV	NY	OH	OK	OR
PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VA	VT	WA	WI	WV	WY						

Hunted US States

AK	AL	AR	AZ	CA	CO	CT	DC	DE	FL	GA	HI	IA	ID	IL	IN	KS	KY	LA
MA	MD	ME	MI	MN	MO	MS	MT	NC	ND	NE	NH	NJ	NM	NV	NY	OH	OK	OR
PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VA	VT	WA	WI	WV	WY						



## HUNTERS

- Create an account on <https://pota.app>
  - This way any references to your callsign get credited to you
  - If you've hunted prior to creating an account, those will also be credited to you
- That's it really.
- Try making goals that pertain to awards you can receive

# HUNTING - How To

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- Spin the VFO, especially on 20 and 40 which are the most popular bands, listen for "CQ POTA, CQ Parks on the Air"
- Find them on <https://pota.app> "Spots" page
  - POTA activators will usually spot themselves first here, and get re-spotted by other hunters
  - They may not have internet at their park and have to blindly call CQ, and if so they'd really like you to "spot" them. Click "Add Spot" on the pota.app Spots page.

# HUNTING - How To

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- Only POTA activators submit logs to the POTA system
  - Hunters do not submit logs to POTA
  - Any logging you do as a hunter is for your own personal satisfaction.
- Log if you want to, or not if you don't.



# ACTIVATORS

- Read rules on parksontheair.com, create an account, click "Help/Getting Started" then "[Activators PDF Guide](#)"
- Be respectful of others enjoying park, not a nuisance.
- Clean up after yourself. Leave it like you found it, or better.



# ACTIVATING - How To

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- HF Radio
- Antenna - End Feds, Dipoles, Links, Traps, Verticals, Coils, Radials. Great chance to **Experiment!**
- Power Source
- Something to log (computer + logging app, or pen & paper)
- FT8 and other digital modes very common – will need a computer connected to radio.

# ACTIVATING - How To

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- Where - picnic tables, pavilions, setting up right on the ground on a picnic blanket, in your camper, in your car just passing through with a portable
- Be reasonable with your antenna.
  - Practice safety.
  - Tag your NVIS with HI-VIS flags.
  - Kids love climbing on things, even wire antennas.

# ACTIVATING - Tips

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- Practice in your backyard!
  - Everything - radio, tuner, antenna/radials/counterpoise, coax, batteries and power cables, laptop, CAT and other data cables, headphones. Everything!
  - Make sure everything works.
  - Make sure batteries are charged.
  - Know your setup. Not just so you know you have it all, but so that setup is speedy.



# ACTIVATING - Tips

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- Be familiar with your logging software
  - If possible, already have a log file created with the park number
- Bonus tip: **WRITE DOWN** your park number. In case you don't have internet to spot yourself and have to CQ blindly, having a park number handy will let one of your hunters spot you.

# ACTIVATING - Tips

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- Research/plan where you want to operate.

If the park is a WMA duck pond, and it's first day of duck season, maybe you want to choose another park.

# ACTIVATING - Tips

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- Instead of calling CQ you can hunt other POTA activators.
- And vice-versa, if you're calling CQ you may get a contact from another activator.
- As Park-to-Park:
  - You'll exchange park numbers
  - Both will submit logs since you're both activators
  - You're also both hunters

# ACTIVATING - Technicians?

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- Most POTA activity is 20 & 40 SSB for which you don't have privileges, so you'll be limited. But there is activity you can still do!
- VHF/UHF - (note: simplex only, no repeater use!)
- 6m – full band, won't find much here but try! There are special 6m POTA awards and some people really try for them

# ACTIVATING - Technicians?

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- 10m - SSB on 28.3-28.5
- CW!!!
  - 10m (28.0-28.3)
  - 15m (21.025-21.2)
  - 40 (7.025-7.125)
  - 80 (3.525-3.6)

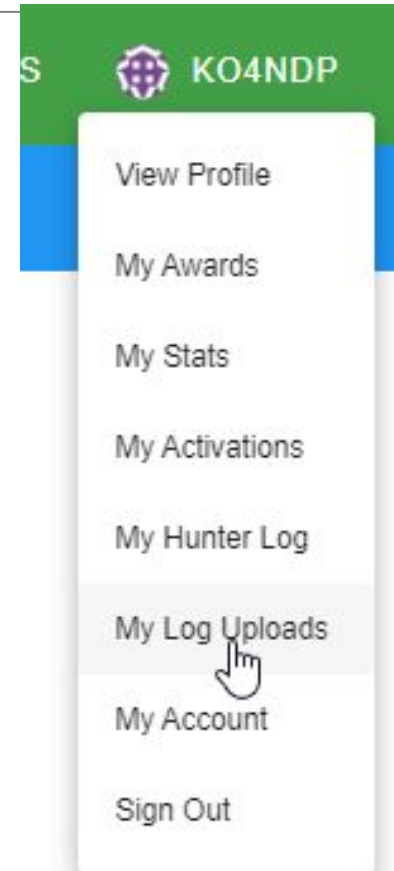
# ACTIVATING - Logging

- N3FJP AC Log
  - Configure fields for easier POTA entry.
  - Good video on [POTA field setup](#)
- HAMRS
  - Parks On The Air log template is very specific to what you need
  - Tip: when hunting, in "Spots" tab, click Copy to pre-fill all the entry fields

The screenshot shows the HAMRS logging interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Logbooks, QSOs, Settings, Profile, and Help, along with a search bar for 'Enter Callsign'. The main heading is 'K04NDP @K-7453-20240210' with a 'QSOs 12' indicator. The form is divided into several sections: 'THEIR CALLSIGN' (K9MMS), 'RST SENT' (599), 'RST RCVD' (599), 'THEIR PARK' (US-1459), 'COMMENTS', 'TIME' (21:51:00), 'DATE' (2024-04-11), 'OPERATOR' (Gary D Hornbuckle), 'STATE' (WI), 'COUNTY', 'QTH', and 'GRID'. On the right, there are fields for 'FREQUENCY' (14. MHz), 'BAND' (20m), 'POWER (W)' (12), and 'MODE' (CW). Below the form, there are tabs for 'Entries 12', 'QSO Map', and 'POTA Spots'. The 'POTA Spots' tab is active, showing a list of spots with details like frequency, location, and a 'Copy' button.

# ACTIVATING - Submitting Logs

- From your software, export to ADI
- Verify the fields, especially POTA-specific fields (my\_sig\_info for your park, sig\_info for their park, etc)
- One log file should only contain one park (!!!)
- One log file can contain QSOs for one park spanning multiple days
- Upload to <https://pota.app/#/user/logs>
- You can upload multiple logs at once



# MORE TIPS

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- POTA uses UTC/Zulu time. A lot of activity right before and after 8pm EDT since that's the crossover to a new "day".
- Check a park's page for a early/late shift times, as well as a URL that may contain boundary maps
- Have a backup logging plan in case of unexpected technical difficulties (laptop power dead or Windows issues)
- Have a reference handy for band plans and any other information you might find handy in the field - RF Spotting message protocol, Specific mode frequencies, anything useful.





# EXTREME POTA

- Competitive POTA
- 2-Ops
- Route Planning
- Mobile Setup
- Personnel, getting everyone on board
- Contingencies
- Off-grid spotting

# COMPETITIVE POTA

Score Submitted



**CALLSIGN:** K4C  
**OPERATING CLASS:** Club  
**POWER CLASS:** Club  
**FIRST TIME ACTIVATOR:** NO  
**REPEAT OFFENDER:** YES ( 50 points)  
**HIKE-IN BONUS:** YES ( 100 points)  
**# of PARKS ACTIVATED:** 12  
**# of CONTACTS:** 713  
**# of UNIQUE PARKS CONTACTED:** 10  
**TOTAL SCORE:** 9306  
**CONFIRMATION NUMBER:** K4C20240408131735  
**P2P PARKS HUNTED LIST:**  
US-2169 US-2170 US-2175 US-2178 US-2186 US-2187 US-2189 US-2193 US-2194 US-3726

## 2023 Top Scores

### Club

- ★ 1st - W4EVC Etowah Valley Amateur Radio Club (1332 pts)
- ★ 2nd - K4B Glynn Amateur Radio Association (747 pts)
- ★ 3rd - W4R Middle Georgia Amateur Radio Association (595 pts)

### LOGS UPLOADED:

k4c@us-2166-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2167-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2171-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2176-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2187-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2192-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2194-20240406.adi  
k4c@us-2199-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2202-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2203-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2204-20240407.adi  
k4c@us-2206-20240407.adi



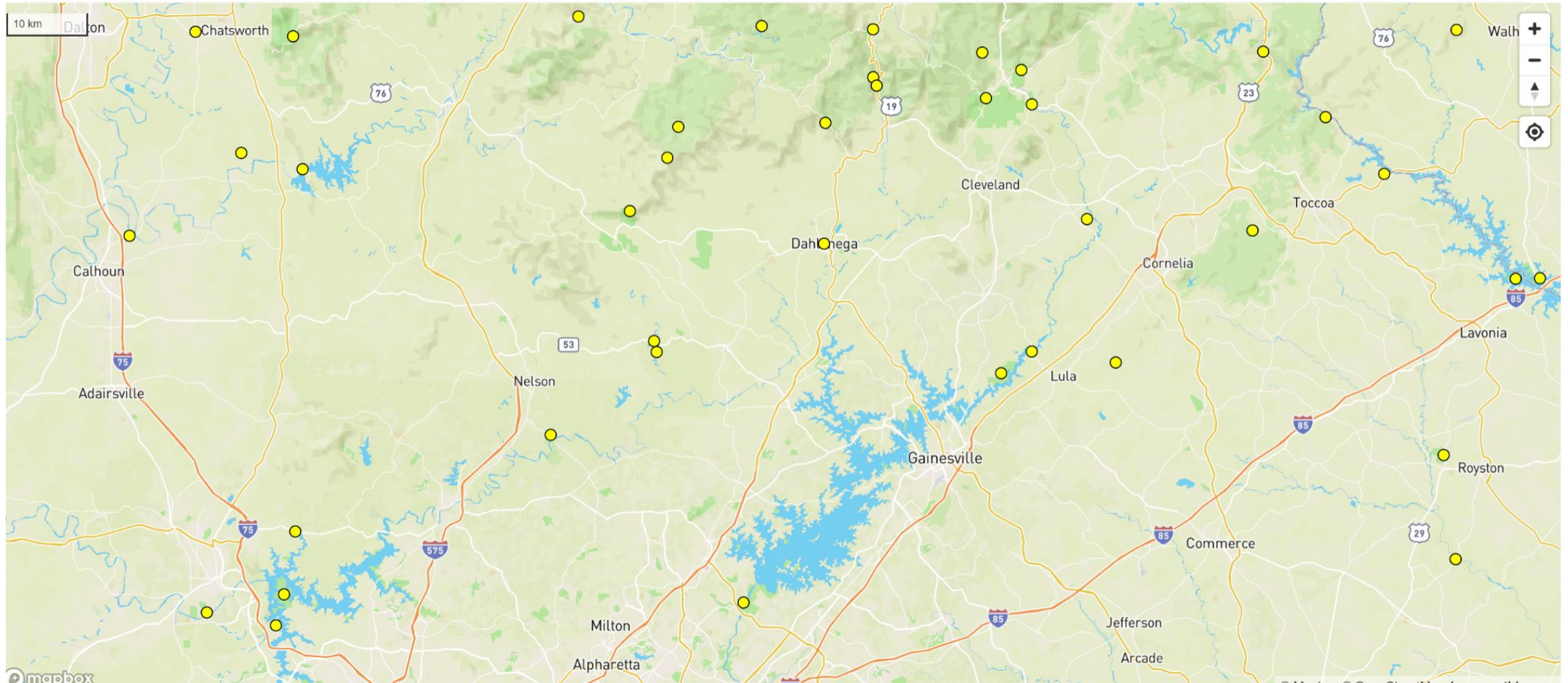
# ACTIVATING WITH ANOTHER OP

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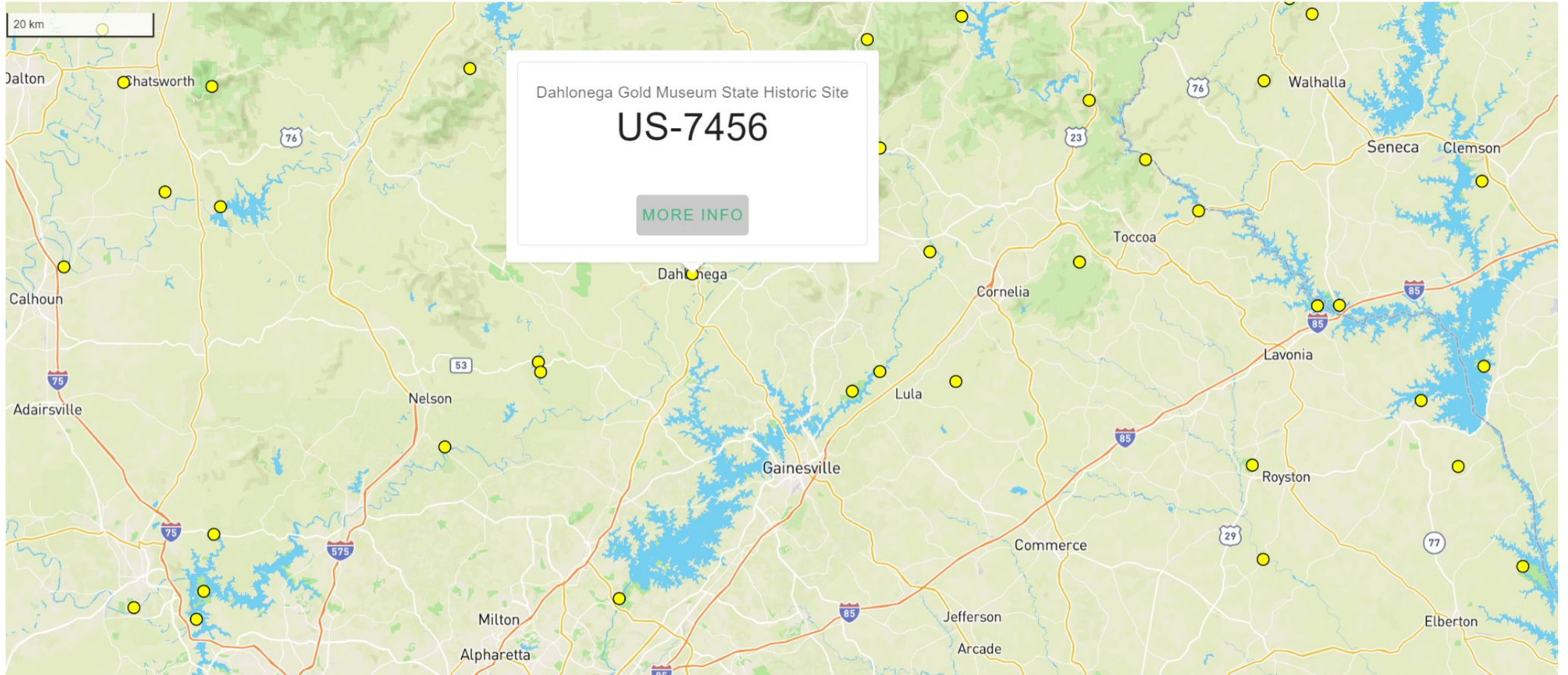
- With "2 ops" you're an easy 2 park contacts at once and you'll be very sought-after, especially from other parks. Get ready for pile-ups.
- Tip: One will "work" the CQ and pass the mic to the second operator. 2nd operator may be useful for noting callsigns/partials in a pileup and other helpful duties
- Tip: Be sure your QSO flow lets your caller know there's a 2nd operator before they 73 and jet!
- Tip: Not done when operating with a club call

# ROUTE PLANNING

[POTA Map](#)



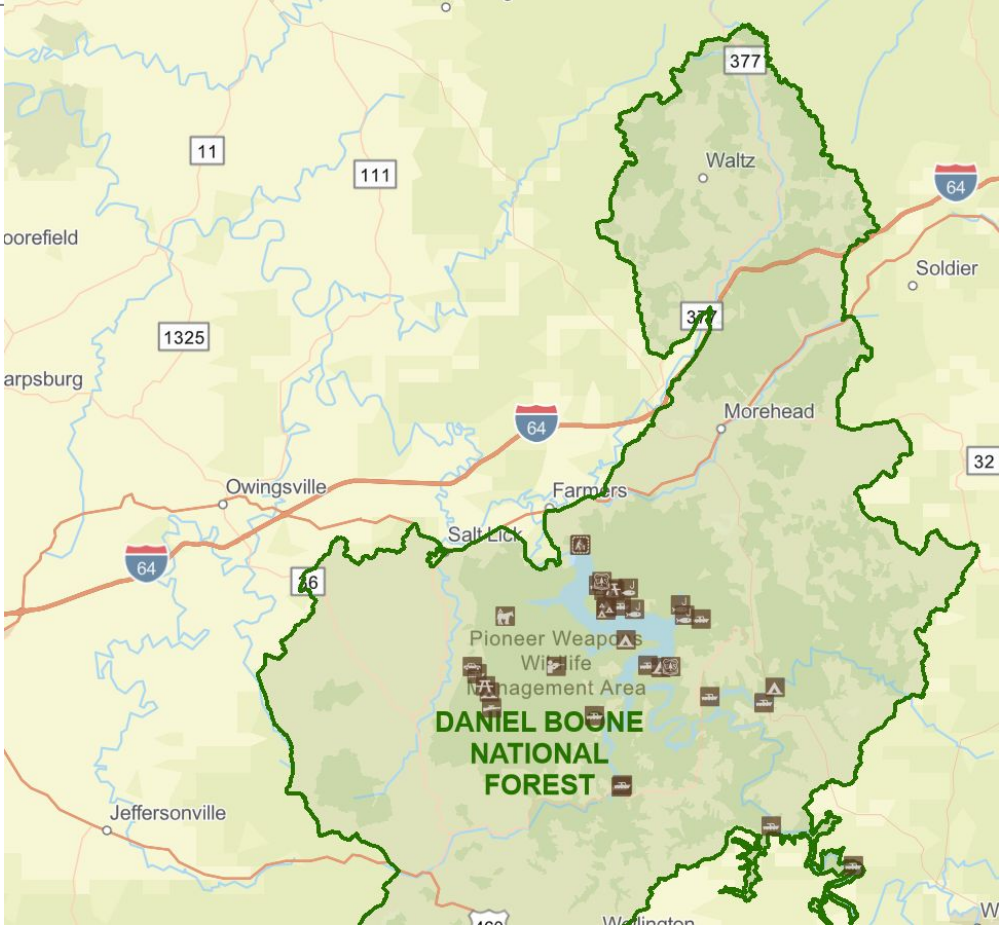
# ROUTE PLANNING



# ROUTE PLANNING

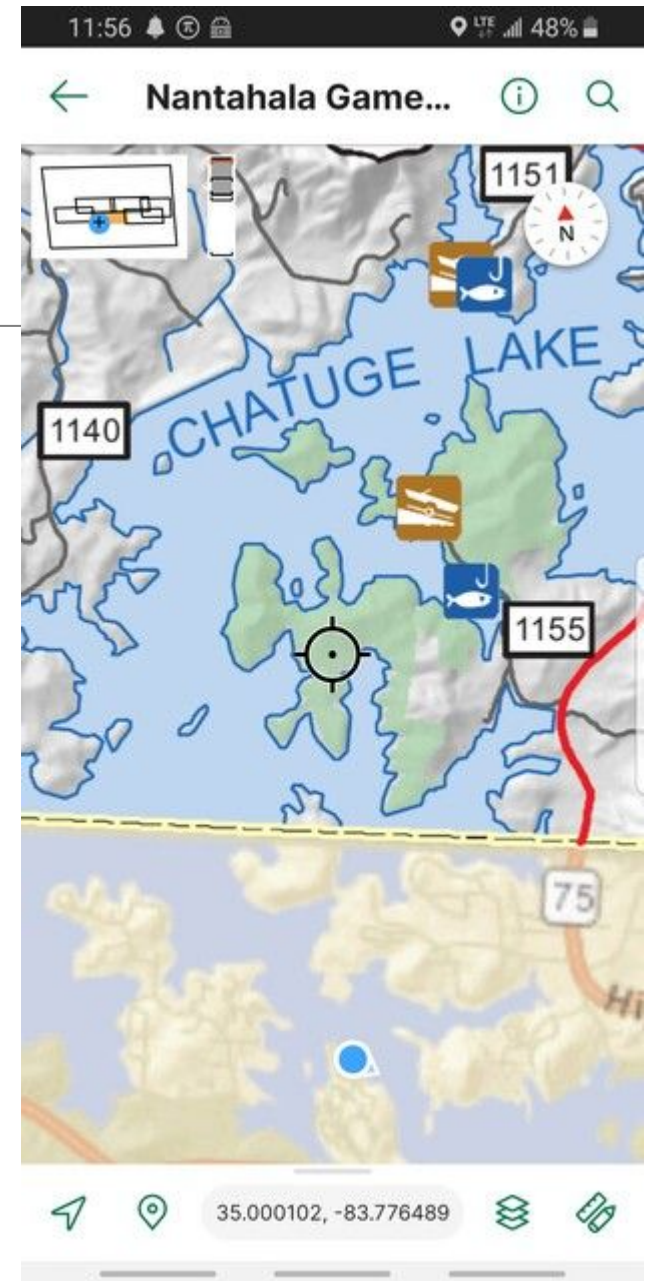
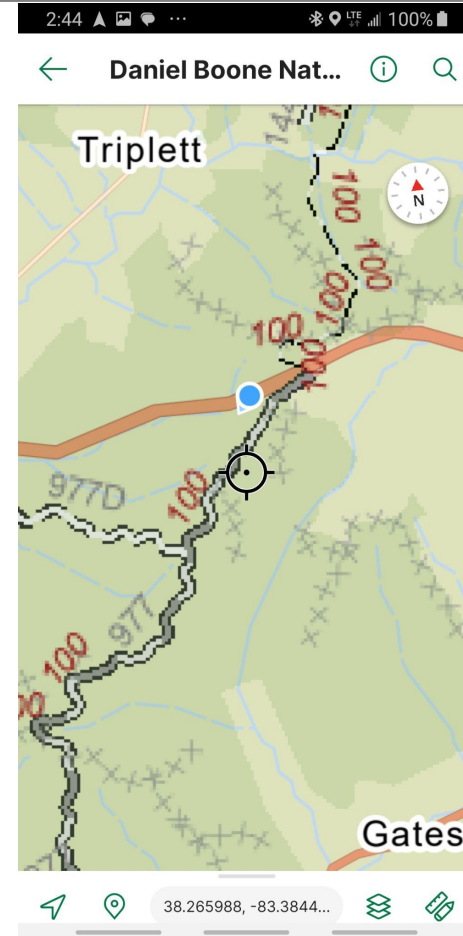
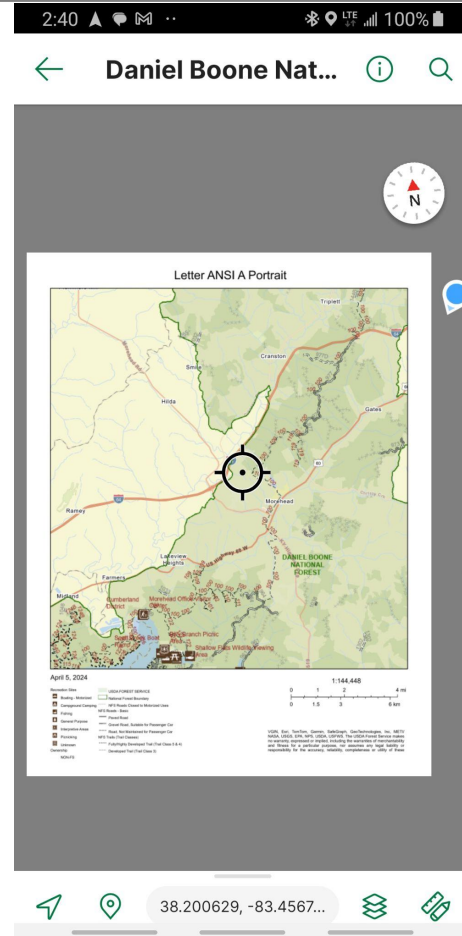
Maps & Publications

Daniel Boone National Forest	
Reference:	US-4484
Entity:	United States of America
Location(s):	US-KY
Latitude / Longitude:	37.9937, -84.2136 (EM77vx)
Early Shift Award Times:	8:00 UTC to 14:00 UTC
Late Shift Award Times:	0:00 UTC to 8:00 UTC
Website:	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/dbnf/">https://www.fs.usda.gov/dbnf/</a>

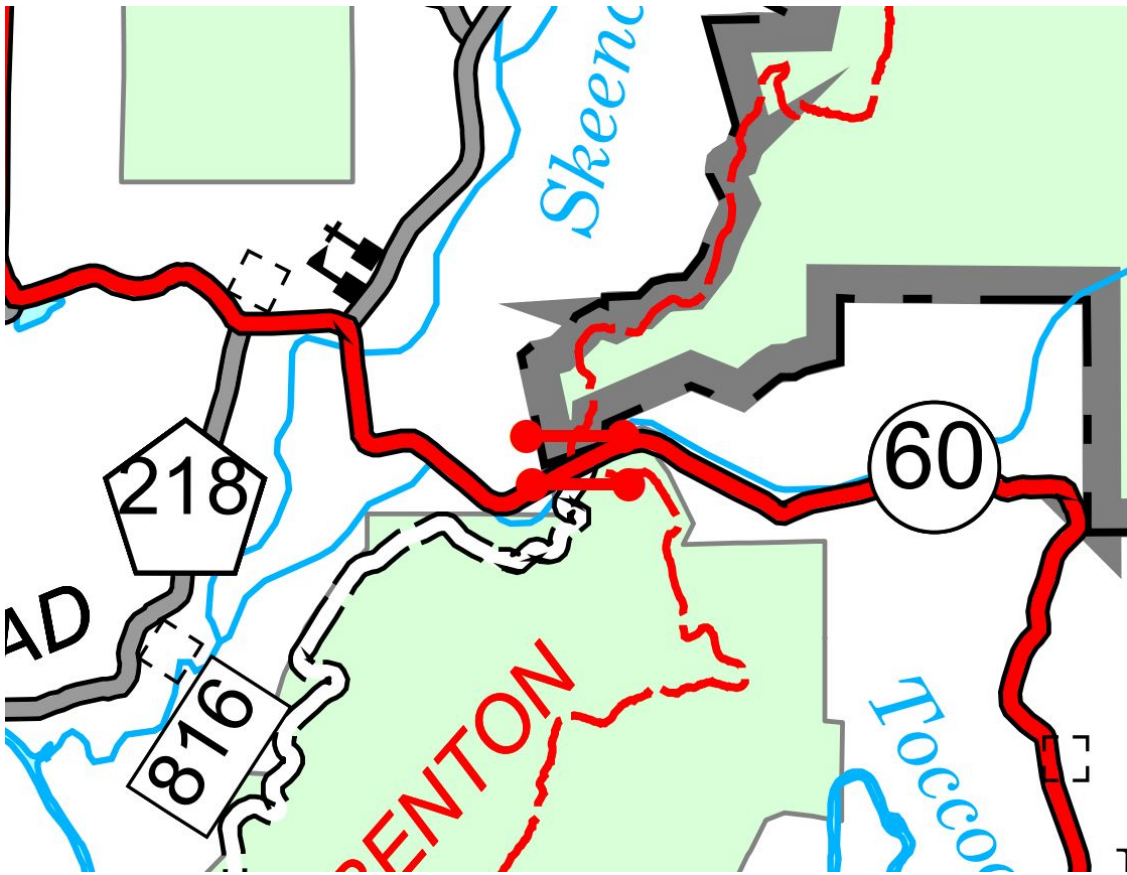


# ROUTE PLANNING

Avenza Maps



# ROUTE PLANNING





# ROUTE PLANNING

## [POTA Park List](#)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (US) ▸ UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ▸ GEORGIA (US-GA) ▼

DOWNLOAD ▼

Reference	Park	Location(s)	Grid	Attempts	Activations	QSOs
US-0259	Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM81	41	38	1831
US-0260	Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM91	5	5	206
US-0261	Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM82	34	34	1720
US-0262	Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM91	67	65	3188
US-0263	Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM80	46	46	1645
US-0264	Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM83	36	35	1041
US-0266	Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM91	9	9	430
US-0267	Wolf Island National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA	EM91	5	5	209
US-0522	Savannah National Wildlife Refuge	US-GA, + 1	EM92	402	394	14376



Parks on the Air



KO4NDP  
[View Profile](#)



Add Spot



Add Activation



Spots



Activations



Map



Park List



# ROUTE EXECUTION

11 hr 30 min 11 days 3 days

- 113 Breckenridge Dr, Canton, GA 30115
- 2707 S Rutherford Blvd 1011 b, Murfreesboro, TN
- My Old Kentucky Home State Park, 501 E...
- Sunny Brook WMA, Lakeview Heights, KY
- Stonewall Resort, 940 Resort Dr, Roanoke, VA

+ Add destination

Options

Send directions to your phone Copy link

via I-75 N and I-24 W 11 hr 30 min  
11 hr 30 min without traffic 726 miles

⚠ This route has restricted usage or private roads.

⚠ Your destination is in a different time zone.

The map displays a route starting at 113 Breckenridge Drive in Canton, Georgia, heading north to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, then west to Lakeview Heights, Kentucky, and finally east to Stonewall Resort in Roanoke, Virginia. The route is highlighted in blue. Key locations along the way include My Old Kentucky Home State Park and Sunny Brook WMA. The map also shows major cities like Louisville, Cincinnati, Knoxville, Asheville, and Charlotte, as well as state boundaries for Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia. A cluster of orange star icons is visible near the starting point in Georgia.

# ROUTE PLANNING

Avenza Maps



# MOBILE SHACK

- Super fast setup!
- Running rig in vehicle
- Vehicle mounted vertical antenna (mag mount, clamp, bumper, etc)
- MFJ Hamstick, Hustler, Gabil
- Practice setup and teardown
- If roving, packing away neatly will pay dividends toward your next park setup



# CONTENGENCIES

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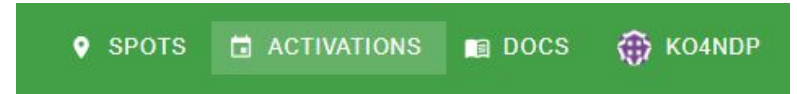
- Have a backup plan for everything – a second radio
- More than one antenna, more than one TYPE of antenna
- SSB QSOs are super fast, but in poor propagation FT8 will get through

# ROVING WITH AN ENTOURAGE

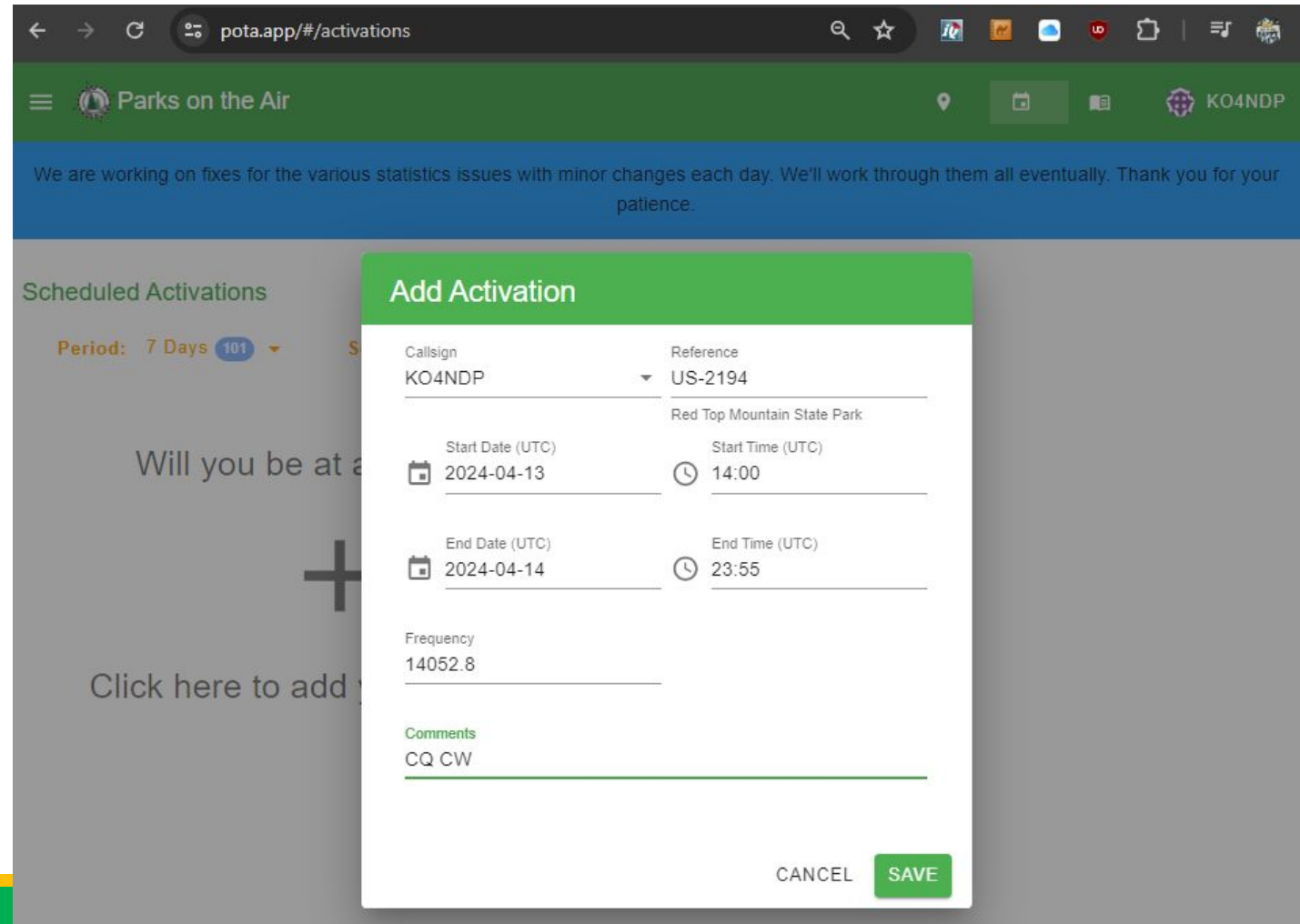
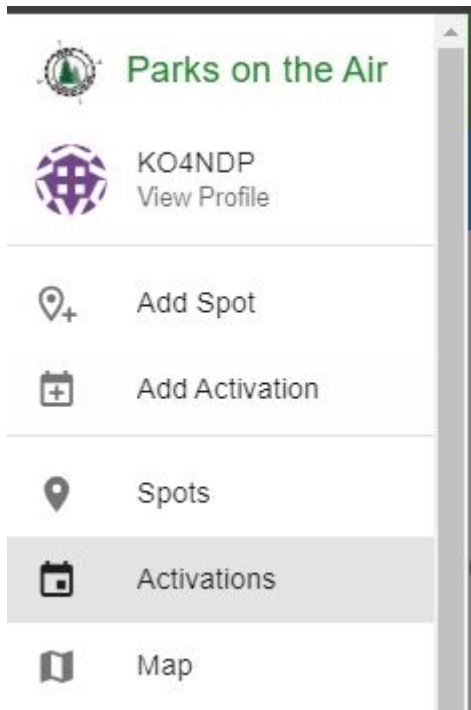
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- Find activities for kids and spouses (or let them join!)
- Trail hikes, sightseeing, or other adventures at the park?
- Make sure everyone has fun.
- Don't forget food and bathroom breaks. Plan accordingly.

# OFF-GRID SPOTTING



- Scheduled Activation



# OFF-GRID SPOTTING

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- SOTAMat - Phone app, utilizes FT8 to trigger service watching  
pskreporter
- JS8Call
  - Just call CQ POTA and ask them to spot :D
  - @APRSIS CMD :POTAGW :KO4NDP K-TEST 7064.8 CW CQ CW
  - @APRSIS CMD :SMSGTE-TW:W1LMS WWFF KFF-0001 7.200 SSB CQ
  - @APRSIS CMD :APSPOT :! POTA W1LMS K-0001 7200 SSB CQ



# OFF-GRID SPOTTING

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- Winlink
  - To: [apspot@apspot.radio](mailto:apspot@apspot.radio)
  - From: KO4NDP
  - Subject message: ! <Activity> <Ref> <Frequency In MHz>  
<Mode> <Comment(Optional)>
  - Eg: ! POTA K-TEST 7.054 CW CQ CW

# OFF-GRID SPOTTING

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- APRS
  - Send message to APSPOT
  - From: KO4NDP-X
  - Body: ! POTA K-TEST 7.0648 CW CQ CW

# OFF-GRID SPOTTING TIPS

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- **PRACTICE IT** when you don't need it. If you're using it for the first time when you need it, I will assure you it will not work.
- **Have notes** with you
- **Have several methods** in case one doesn't work. These services are run by enthusiast volunteers and one may be unavailable when you need it.
- **Have what you need** - All require a digital mode, got your cables?