



# Parks on the Air (POTA) Program Overview

**KEVIN CULP, KZ3L AND JACK KIBELBEK, N8EU**

**WARREN COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION**

**APRIL 5, 2022**



# INTRODUCTION

- Presenters
  - Kevin Culp, KZ3L
    - Licensed since 1983 – Amateur Extra Class since 1986
    - Primarily a CW & portable op
    - Currently the Ohio POTA Mapping Coordinator
    - 32-year active duty Air Force career + civil service – Engineering / Occupational Health
  - Jack Kibelbek, N8EU
    - Licensed since 1969 – Amateur Extra Class since 2018
    - Primarily a CW op + portable QRP
    - Retired pediatrician





# INTRODUCTION

- What is Parks on the Air (POTA)?
  - A FUN, FUN activity! ← NOT a contest
  - Promotes portable amateur radio operations & enjoyment of our parks
  - An awards program
  - Encourages communications “readiness”
  - Enjoy “field day” any day of the year!
  - No HOA restrictions or local electrical noise – **HUGE DIFFERENCE!**
  - Combine with other hobbies—disc golf, fishing, camping, hiking, boating, etc.





# INTRODUCTION

- Origin: ARRL's National Parks on the Air (NPOTA) – 2016
  - Celebration of USA's 100 year National Park history
  - POTA program began shortly thereafter
- Started in US, now International
  - >9,000 parks in the U.S.
  - Numerous countries being added
  - Activators often feel like rare DX, even CONUS!

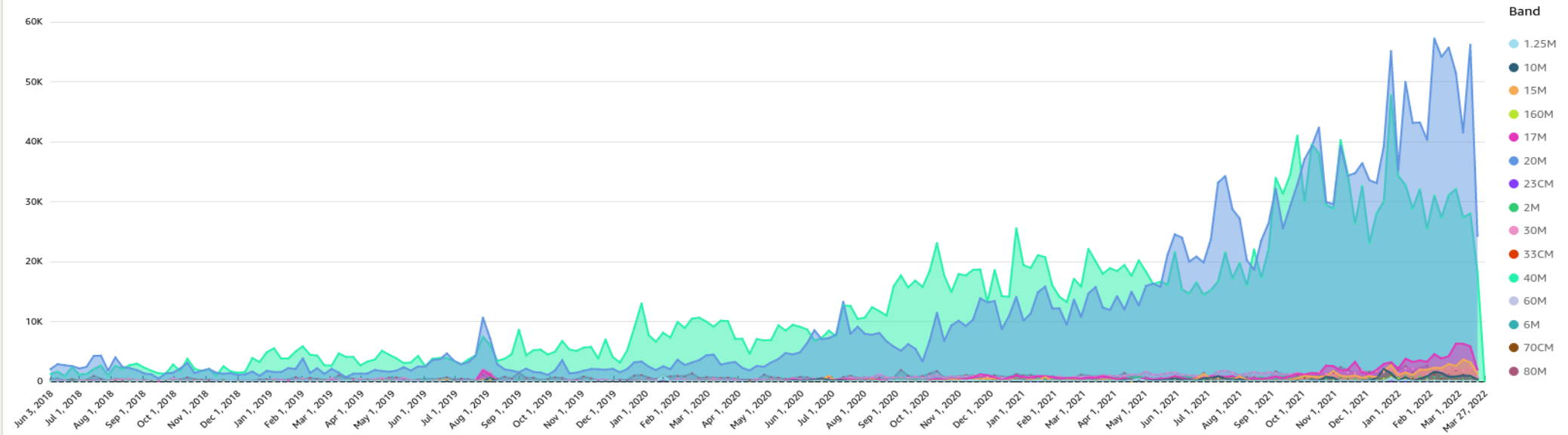


**National Parks**  
**ON THE AIR**

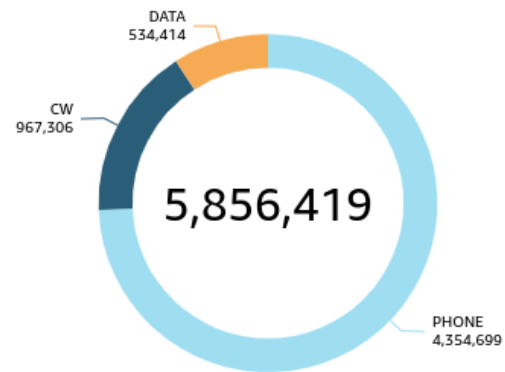
**2016**



### QSOs by Week and Band

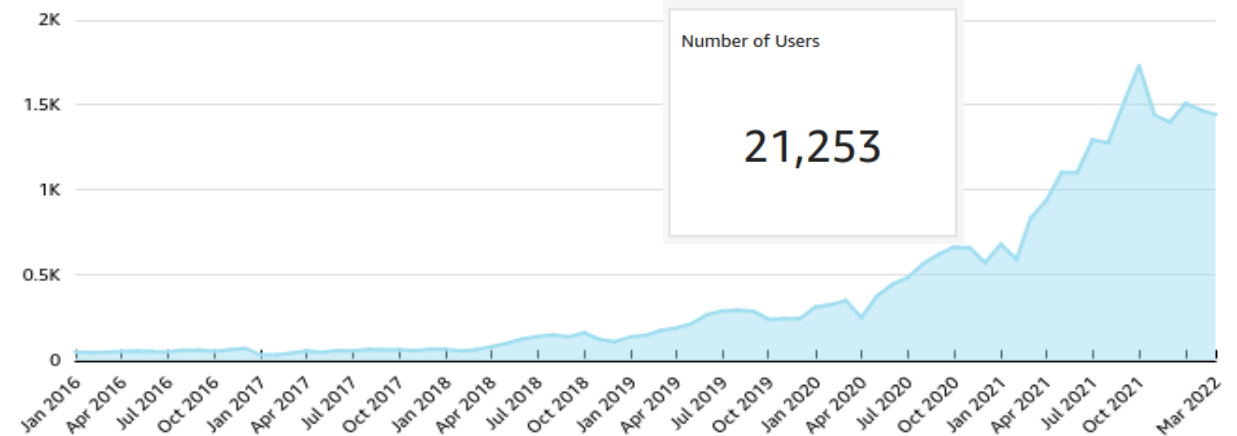


### QSOs by Mode Group



Group By: mode  
Size: qsold (Count distinct)

### Number of Users Activating Per Month





# TERMINOLOGY

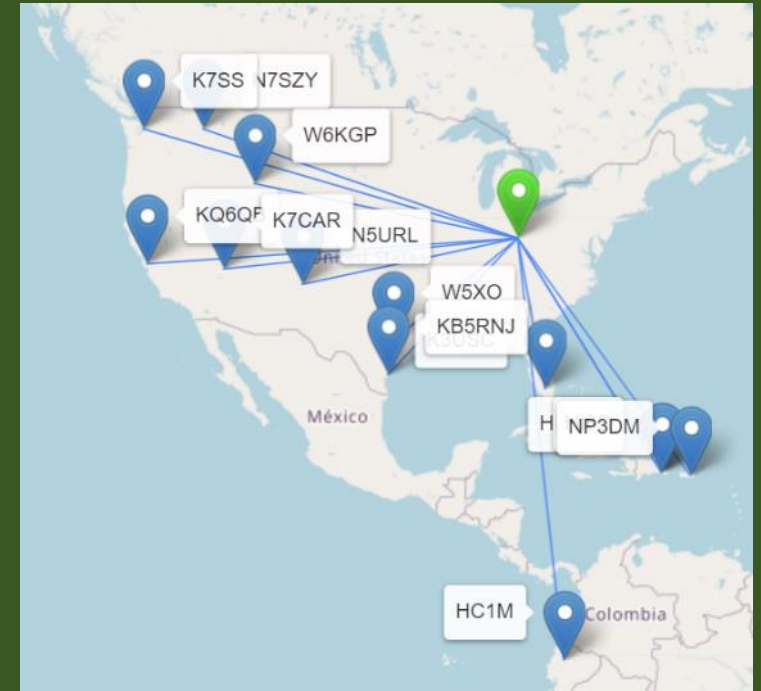
- Park (a.k.a. “reference area”)
  - Federal- or State-owned and operated entity
  - Parks, sites, forests, preserves, refuges, wildlife areas, trails, etc.
  - MUST be listed in the POTA database to count (e.g. K-1940)





# TERMINOLOGY

- Activation
  - Station completes 10+ QSOs in any 24-hour UTC day from the park
  - Distinct QSO = band + mode + call
  - No specified exchange! ANY QSO counts (even contest QSOs)
  - Simplex only (except satellite)
  - No limit on # activations at a park
- Activator
  - A station which activates a park
  - Must be located in the park (duh!)
  - Trail: within 100', on public land





# TERMINOLOGY

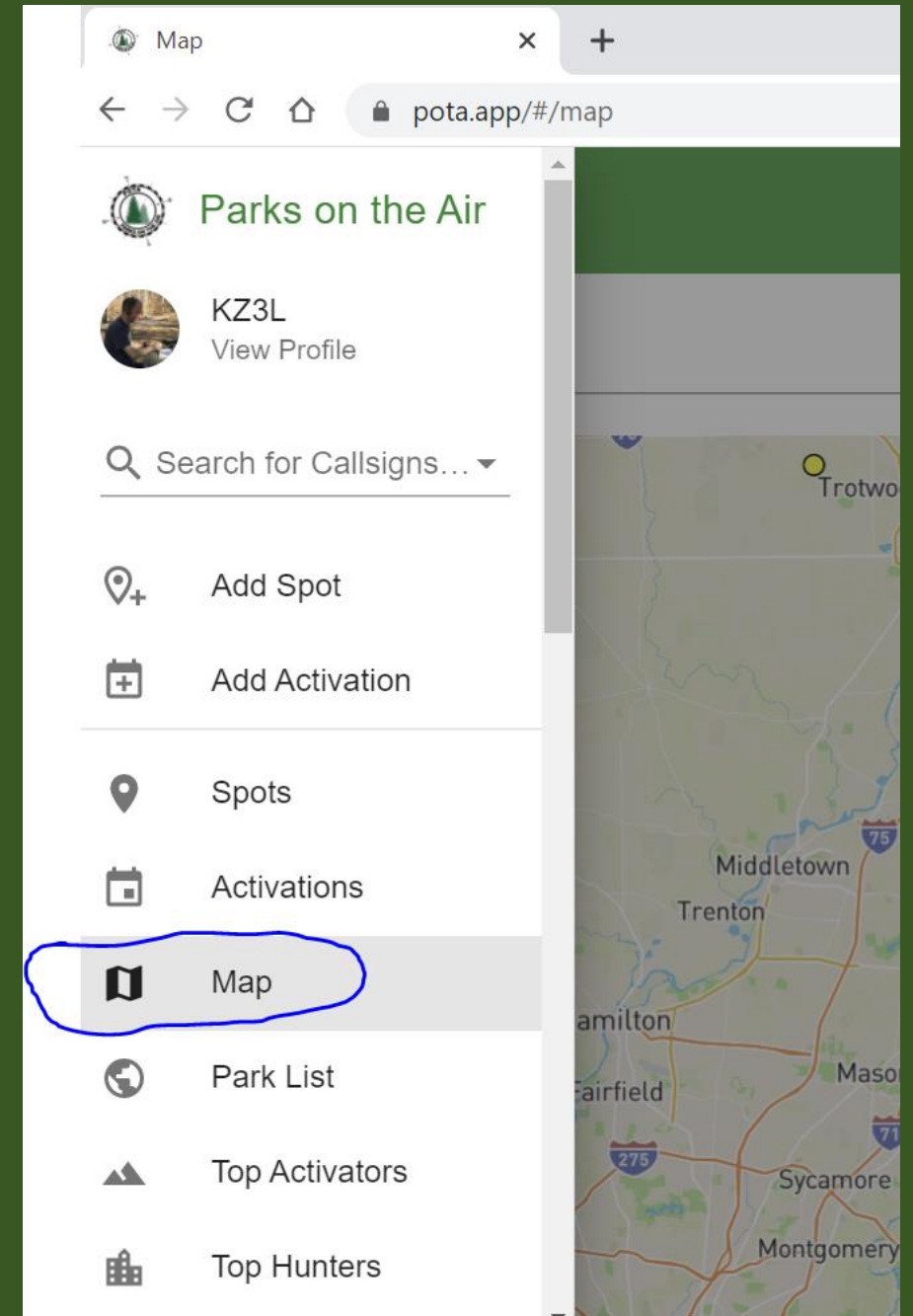
- Hunter
  - A station which calls an activator
  - An activator can ALSO be a hunter; see below
- Park-to-Park
  - QSO between two parks
- Late Shift
  - Between the hours of 0000 and 1200 UTC





# ACTIVATING A PARK

- Selecting a park
  - Look on <http://pota.app>
  - Research geographic boundaries
    - Ohio: DNR GIS or Park Web Site  
<https://gis.ohiodnr.gov/MapView/?config=ODNRLands>
  - Know park rules (hours, limitations, access, parking, trails, etc.)
    - Check the official park web site  
<https://ohiodnr.gov/go-and-do/plan-a-visit/find-a-property/find-a-property-search>





Deer Creek State Park

EDIT

Reference:

K-1945

DXCC Entity:

United States Of America

Location(s):

US-OH

Latitude / Longitude:

39.6037, -83.2312 (EM89jo)

Website:

<https://ohiodnr.gov/go-and-do/plan-a-visit/find-a-visit>

Access Methods:

Automobile

Foot

Activation Methods:

Automobile

Cabin

Campground


Pedestrian

Shelter

Is Active?

ACTIVE

First Activation:

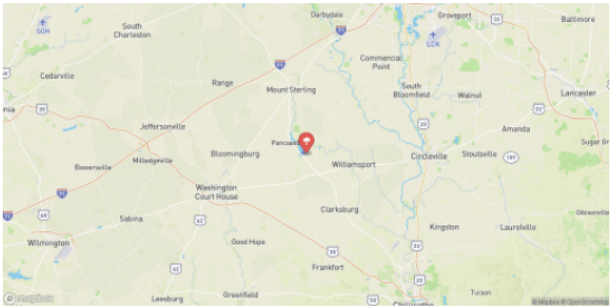
 KC3RW on 2017-05-19

Stats:








38 activations / 38 attempts (1610 QSOs)

OH GIS maps:

<https://gis.ohiodnr.gov/MapViewer/?config=ODNRLands>



Activations

Date	Callsign	CW	Data	Phone	Total QSOs
2022-03-27	 WG8X	14	0	0	14
2022-02-22	 AA9OM	48	0	0	48
2021-09-19	 KB8SSH	0	0	18	18
2021-09-18	 KB8SSH	0	0	29	29
2021-08-08	 KI0EB	0	0	42	42
2021-08-07	 KN4COE	0	0	143	143
2021-					

Park Leaders

Activations

Activator QSOs

Hunter QSOs

p/#/map

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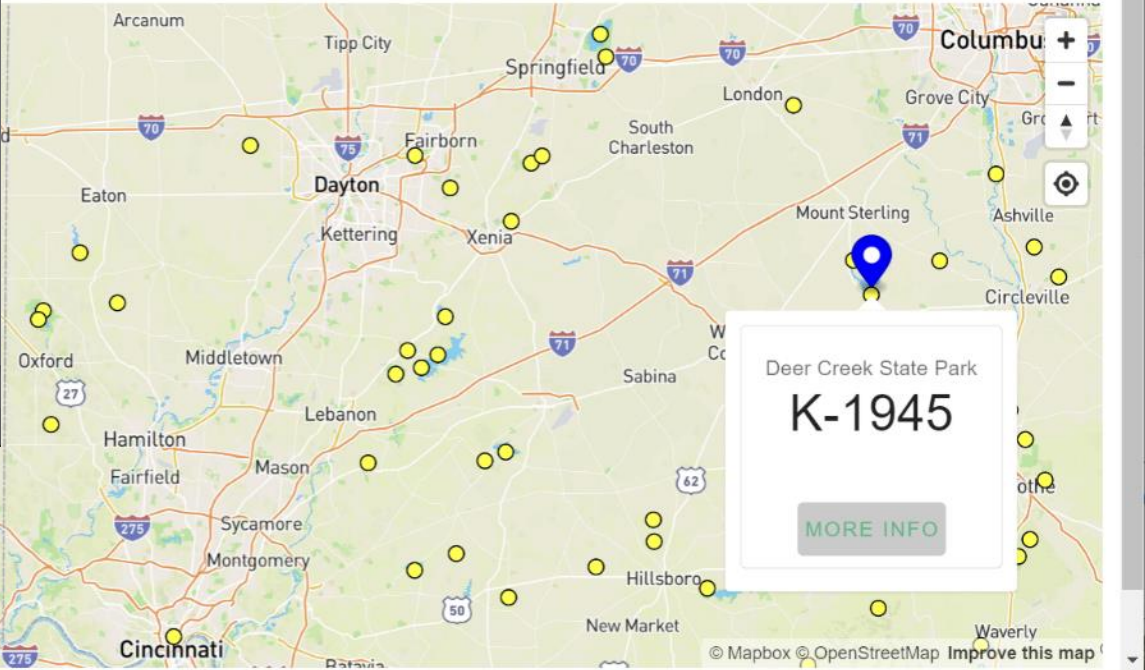
⋮

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📅

👤 KZ3L

Location (State / Province / Region / Area)



Deer Creek State Park

K-1945

MORE INFO





# Lands and Facilities

ODNR

- Legend & Layers
- County Bookmarks
- Other Tools
- Drag and Drop
- Print
- Search

By Attribute

By Shape

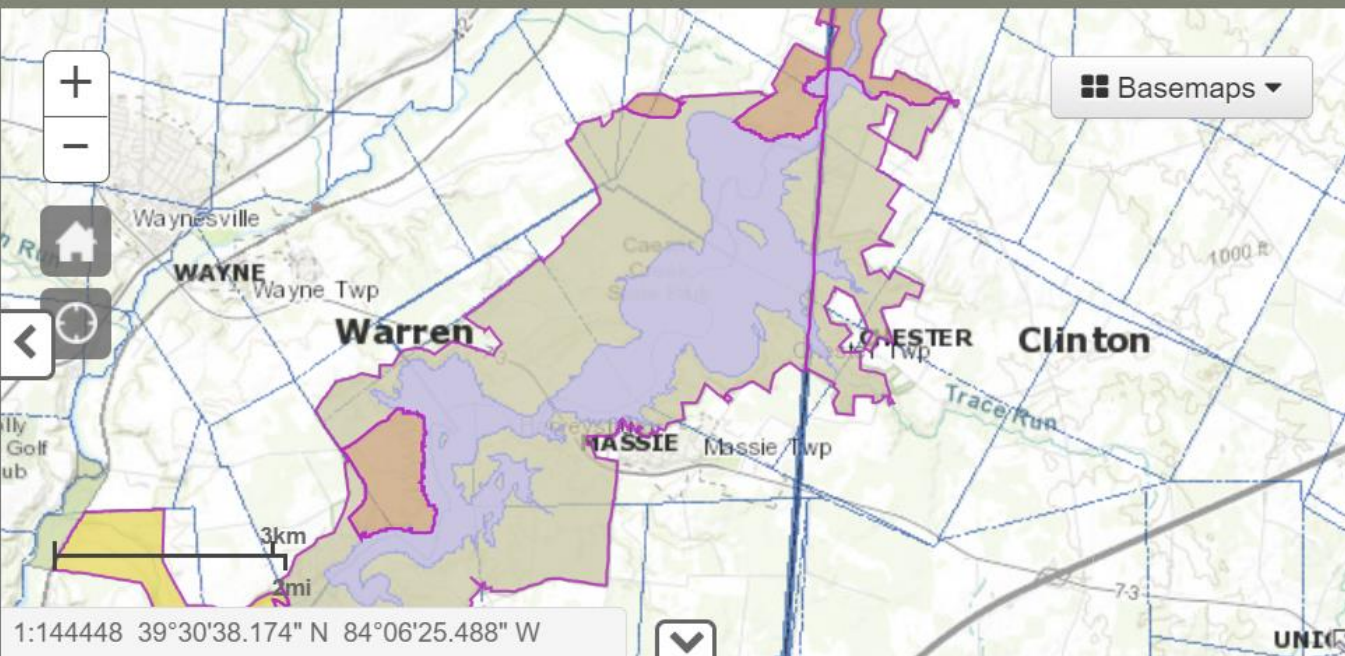
## Select A Layer:

ODNR Lands - Facility Name

## Facility Name:

caesar creek

Search



ODNR Lands - Facility Name [x]

Zoom

Clear

Export

PROPERTY NAME	Property Type	Division	Ownership Type	County	Acres	Managing Agency
Caesar Creek Gorge Nature	Dedicated Nature	Natural Areas and Preserves	Easement	WARREN	5.219531	Division of

1 - 8 of 8 results

« < 1 > » 100



## Plan a Visit

# HUESTON WOODS STATE PARK

## Find a Property

## Events Calendar

## Campgrounds

## Cabins

## Resort Lodges

## Primitive Camping

## Bridle Camps

## Unique Getaways

## Group Facilities



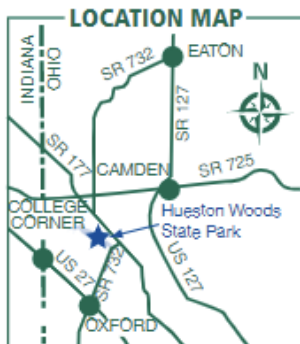
The limestone and shale bedrock of the Hueston Woods region provides evidence of the ancient shallow sea that once covered Ohio. Fossilized remnants of ancient marine



# Hueston Woods State Park

6301 Park Office Road  
College Corner, Ohio 45003

(513) 523-6347 - Park Office  
(513) 664-3500 - Lodge  
(513) 664-3500 - Lodge & Cabin Reservations



## TRAILS

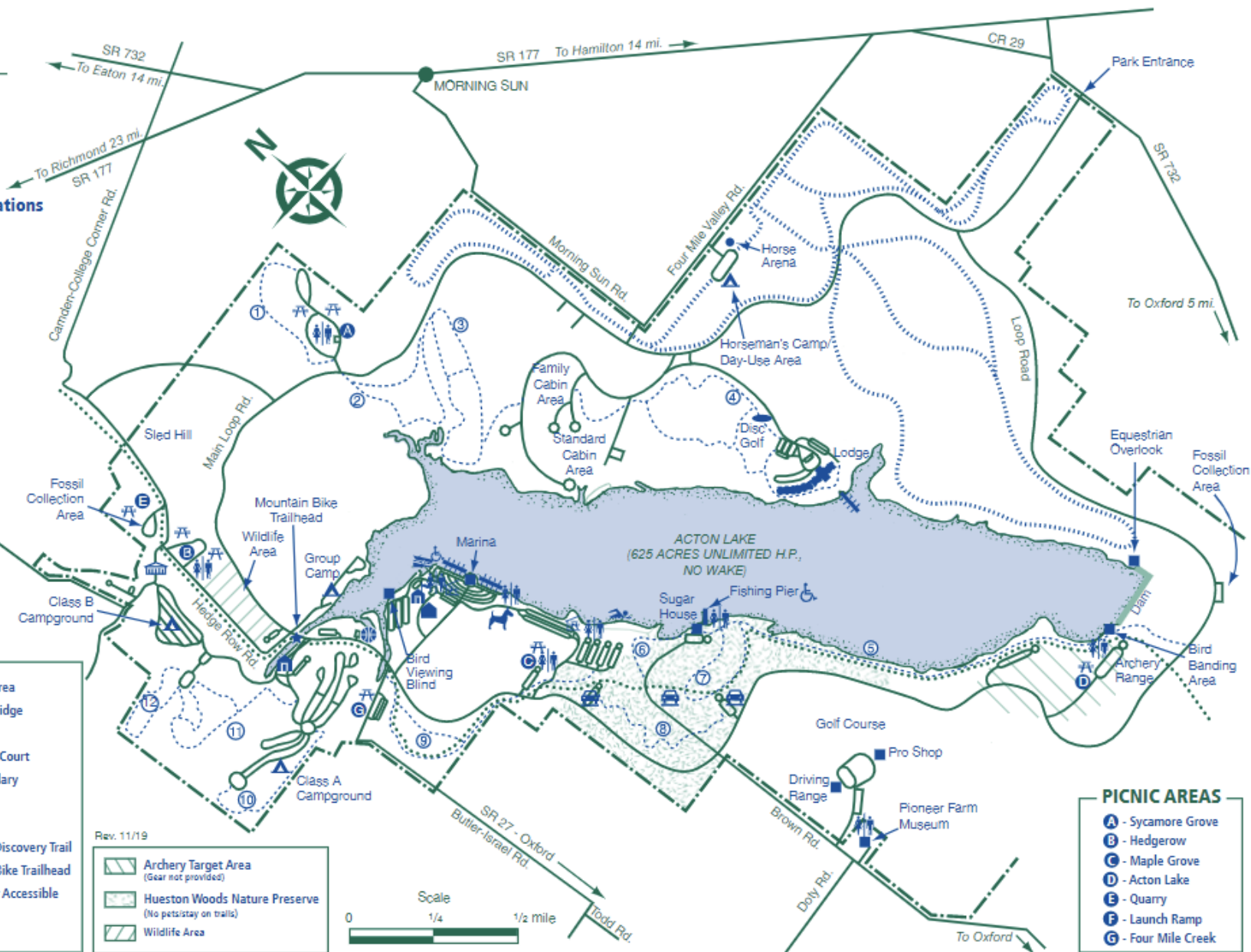
- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| ① - Cedar Falls     | ⑦ - Blue Heron     |
| ② - Sycamore        | ⑧ - Big Woods      |
| ③ - Pine Loop/Cabin | ⑨ - Hedge Apple    |
| ④ - Mud Lick        | ⑩ - Indian Mound   |
| ⑤ - West Shore      | ⑪ - Gallion Run    |
| ⑥ - Sugar Bush      | ⑫ - Equisetum Loop |

## LEGEND

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Park Office              | Camping Area             |
| Camp Check-in/Camp Store | Covered Bridge           |
| Nature Center            | Dog Park                 |
| Picnic Area              | Basketball Court         |
| Picnic Shelter           | Park Boundary            |
| Latrine                  | Hiking Trail             |
| Trailhead Parking        | Bridle Trail             |
| Launch Ramp              | American Discovery Trail |
| Disc Golf                | Mountain Bike Trailhead  |
| Boat Dock                | Wheelchair Accessible    |
| Swimming Beach           |                          |

Rev. 11/19

- |   |
|---|
| Archery Target Area<br>(Gear not provided)                |
| Hueston Woods Nature Preserve<br>(No pets/stay on trails) |
| Wildlife Area   |



## PICNIC AREAS

- |                            |
|----------------------------|
| <b>A</b> - Sycamore Grove  |
| <b>B</b> - Hedgerow        |
| <b>C</b> - Maple Grove     |
| <b>D</b> - Acton Lake      |
| <b>E</b> - Quarry          |
| <b>F</b> - Launch Ramp     |
| <b>G</b> - Four Mile Creek |



# ACTIVATING A PARK

- What's your style?
  - Extremes:
    - All the comforts of home – lodge/cabin?
    - Hike-in activation
  - Very common:
    - Bring your own shelter, tent, or canopy
    - Use existing infrastructure
    - Set up your own table & chair
    - Activate from inside the car











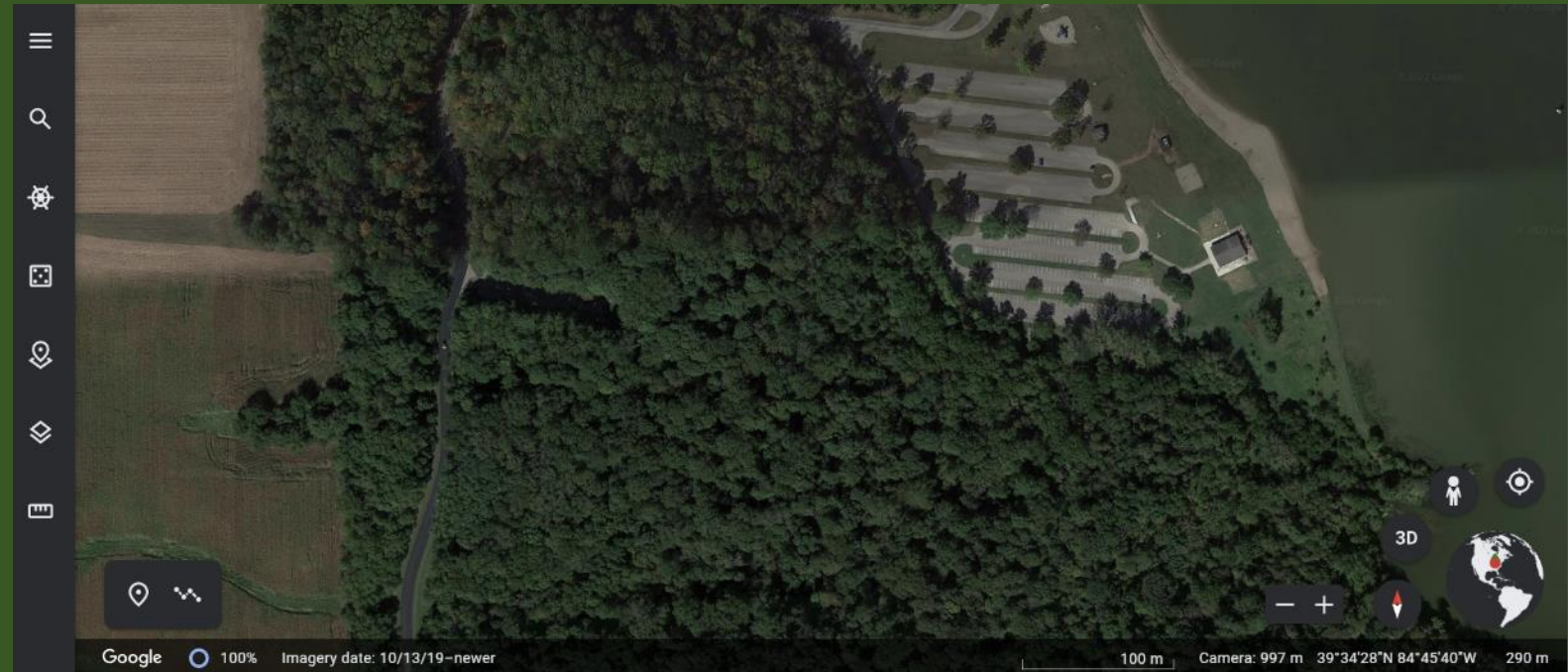






# ACTIVATING A PARK

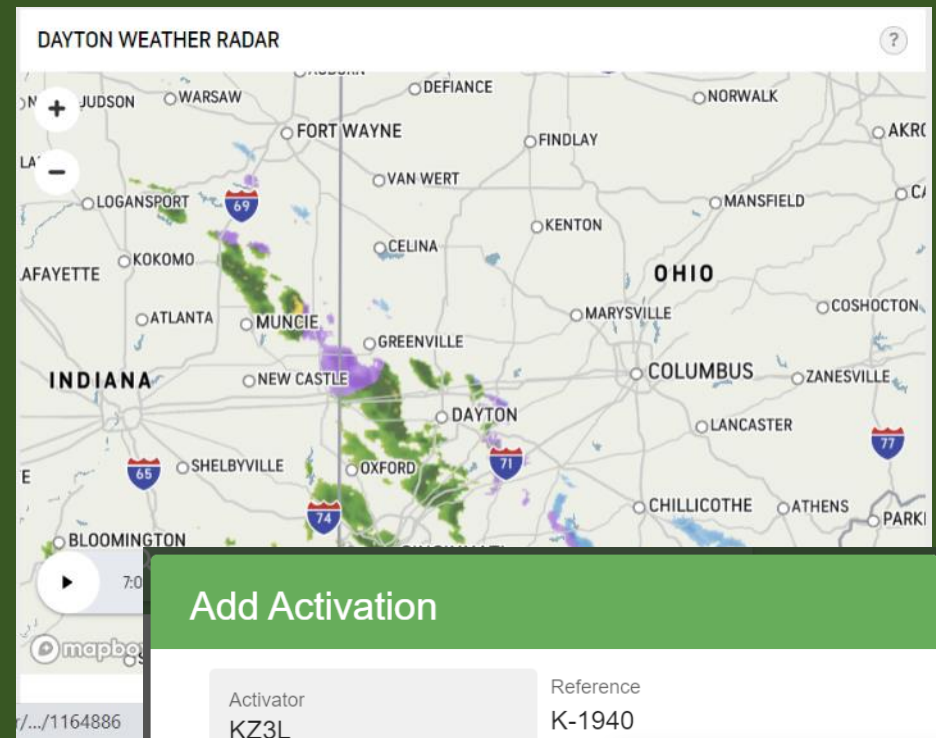
- Where in the park?
  - Use maps, Google Earth, etc.
  - Trees vs. open field vs. parking lot
  - Facilities (you know what we mean)
- Other park users
- Elevation
- The view





# ACTIVATING A PARK

- Before you go
  - Do your planning!
  - Check weather, prop forecast, etc.
  - Document Park # and County
  - Inventory and triple-check equipment
    - Dead battery? Missing coax?
- Schedule your activation on <http://pota.app> (optional)
  - Reverse Beacon Network can help to spot you – CW or Digital
  - Hunters can look for you



**Add Activation**

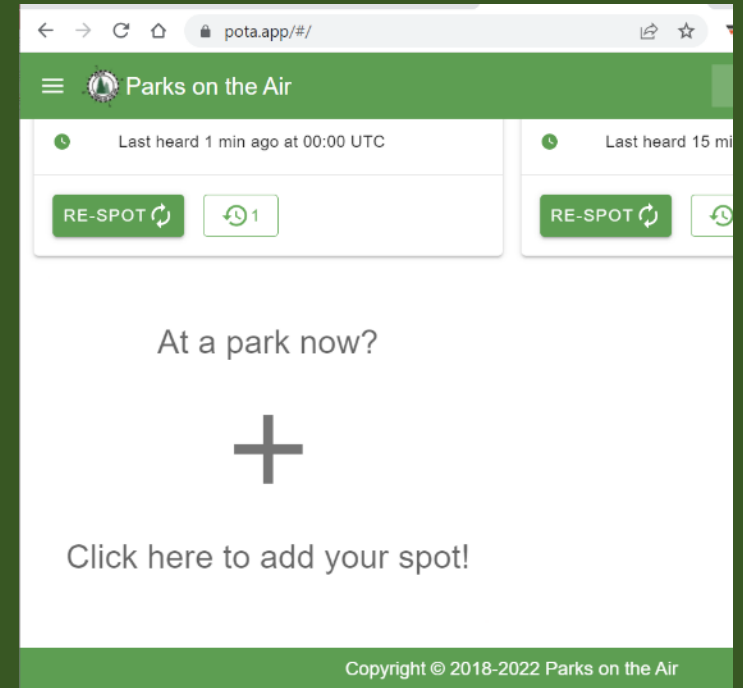
Activator KZ3L	Reference K-1940
Start Date (UTC) 2022-03-29	
End Date (UTC) 2022-03-29	
Frequency 40m, 20m	
Comments CW	

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23



# ACTIVATING A PARK

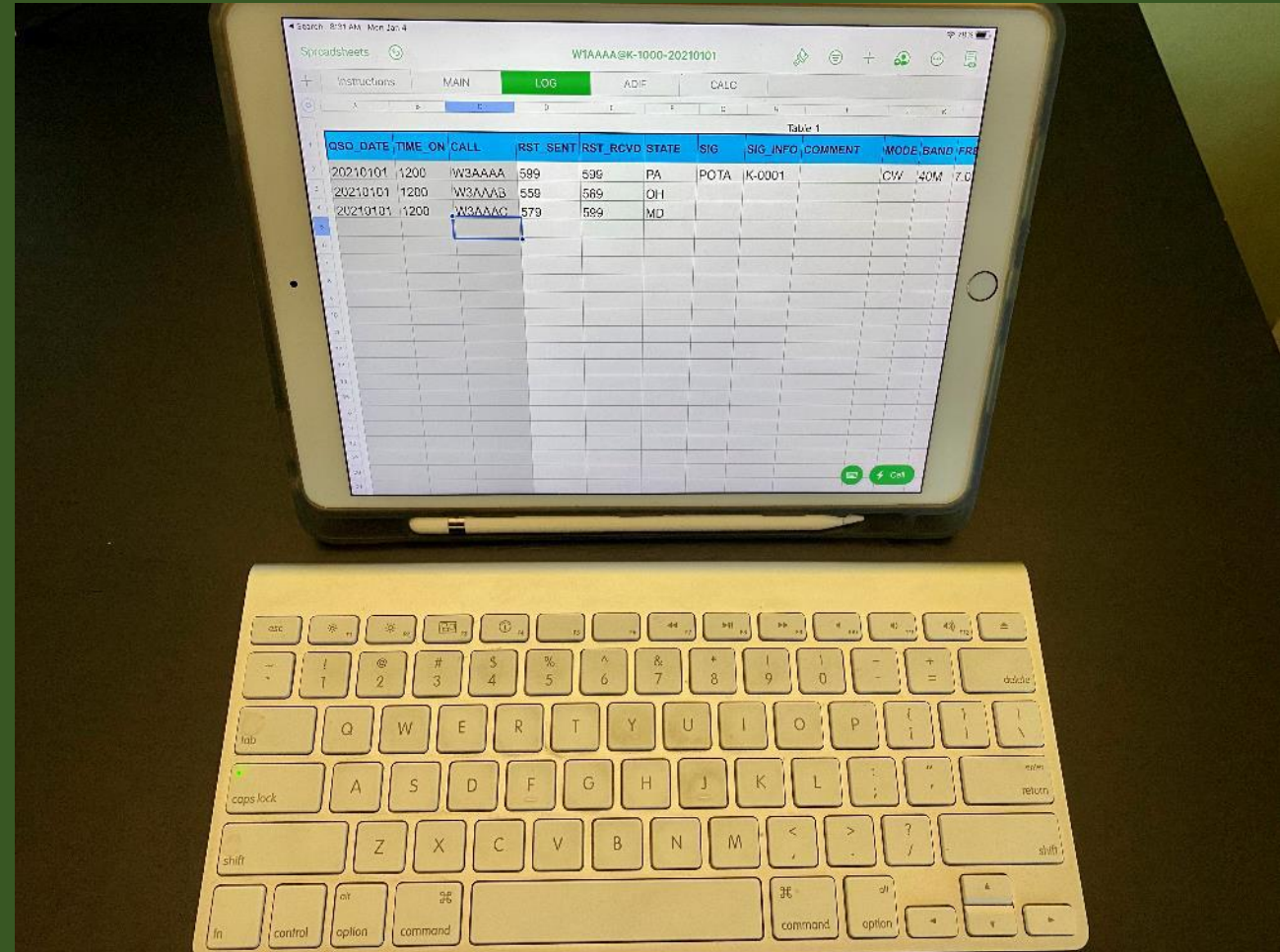
- Select a band: All bands are fair game (incl WARC)
- Spot Yourself on <http://pota.app>
- Calling CQ
  - Listen, then QRL? Is this freq in use?
  - “CQ POTA... from [call] at Park K-####”
- Typical Exchange
  - Call, state, and RS(T) report
  - There is no required exchange
- Tradition: Give priority to “Park to Park” (or “P2P” on CW), “QRP”, and “Mobile”
- CALL OTHER PARKS! (P2P)





# ACTIVATING A PARK

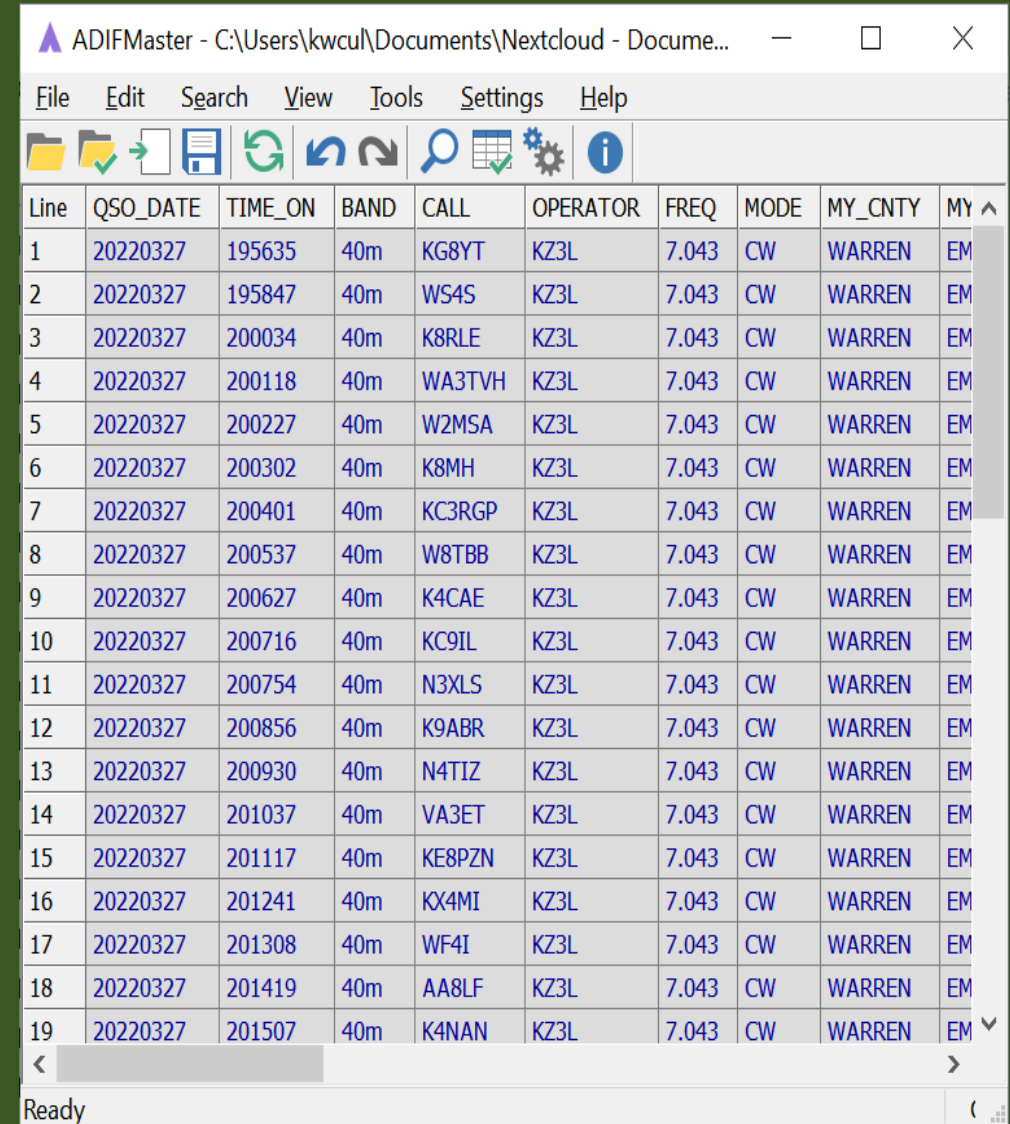
- Logging
  - Date & Time (UTC)
  - Your call
  - Their call
  - Band (freq not req'd for POTA, but helpful for other logs like QRZ and LoTW)
  - Mode
  - Their park # (optional)
    - Avoid dupes if activating multiple parks





# AFTER ACTIVATION

- Repack/refresh/recharge
- Leave park better than you found it
- Finalize log & submit to POTA
  - Triple check logs before sending
  - ADI File (ADIF) format ONLY
  - File name = call@K-####-yyyymmdd
    - Add state if park spans multiple
  - Send to K#@parksontheair.com  
(# = your call sign #)
  - Coordinators are volunteers – might take 3-4 wks for log to appear in stats



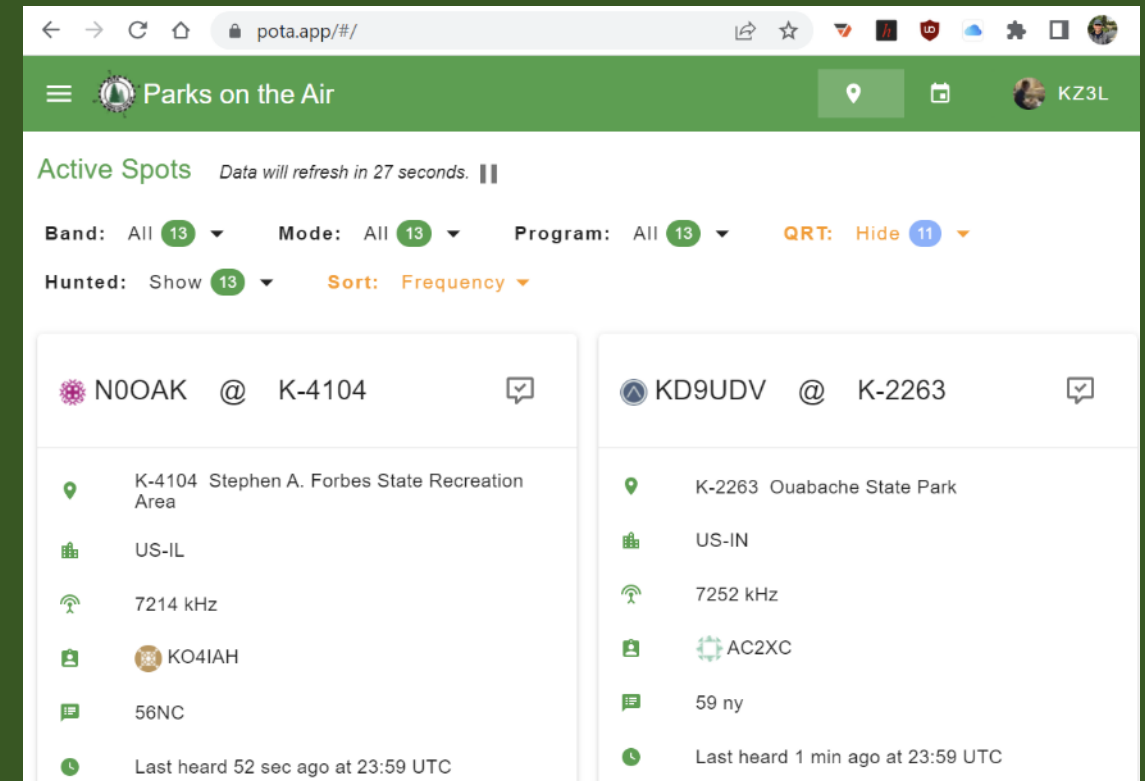
The screenshot shows the ADIFMaster application window. The title bar reads "ADIFMaster - C:\Users\kwcul\Documents\Nextcloud - Docume...". The menu bar includes File, Edit, Search, View, Tools, Settings, and Help. The toolbar contains icons for file operations, undo, redo, search, and settings. The main area displays a table of 19 QSOs, all from 20220327 on the 40m band, with KZ3L as the operator and WARREN as the MY\_CNTY. The status bar at the bottom indicates "Ready".

Line	QSO_DATE	TIME_ON	BAND	CALL	OPERATOR	FREQ	MODE	MY_CNTY	MY ^
1	20220327	195635	40m	KG8YT	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
2	20220327	195847	40m	WS4S	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
3	20220327	200034	40m	K8RLE	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
4	20220327	200118	40m	WA3TVH	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
5	20220327	200227	40m	W2MSA	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
6	20220327	200302	40m	K8MH	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
7	20220327	200401	40m	KC3RGP	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
8	20220327	200537	40m	W8TBB	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
9	20220327	200627	40m	K4CAE	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
10	20220327	200716	40m	KC9IL	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
11	20220327	200754	40m	N3XLS	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
12	20220327	200856	40m	K9ABR	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
13	20220327	200930	40m	N4TIZ	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
14	20220327	201037	40m	VA3ET	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
15	20220327	201117	40m	KE8PZN	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
16	20220327	201241	40m	KX4MI	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
17	20220327	201308	40m	WF4I	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
18	20220327	201419	40m	AA8LF	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
19	20220327	201507	40m	K4NAN	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM



# HUNTING A PARK

- Tune up on empty frequency
- Check spots page--Best way to find activators (pota.app)
- Listen for QSO style & cadence
- Announce your call after CQ, QRZ?
- Spot the activator (pota.app)
- Breaking through pile-ups:
  - On CW, never zero-beat! TX slightly off freq (0.05-0.1 kHz)
  - On SSB, it's tough... tail-ending is discouraged. Compression helps
- Do not submit hunter log to POTA



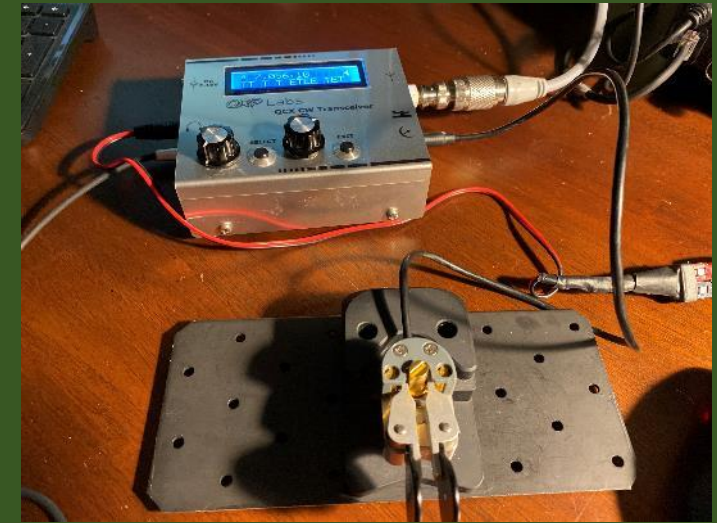
The screenshot shows the POTA website interface. The browser address bar displays 'pota.app/#/'. The page title is 'Parks on the Air'. The user is logged in as 'KZ3L'. The main section is 'Active Spots', with a note 'Data will refresh in 27 seconds.' and a pause button. Below this are filters: 'Band: All 13', 'Mode: All 13', 'Program: All 13', 'QRT: Hide 11', 'Hunted: Show 13', and 'Sort: Frequency'. Two spot cards are visible:

Spot Card 1	Spot Card 2
<b>N0OAK @ K-4104</b>	<b>KD9UDV @ K-2263</b>
<b>K-4104 Stephen A. Forbes State Recreation Area</b>	<b>K-2263 Ouabache State Park</b>
<b>US-IL</b>	<b>US-IN</b>
<b>7214 kHz</b>	<b>7252 kHz</b>
<b>KO4IAH</b>	<b>AC2XC</b>
<b>56NC</b>	<b>59 ny</b>
<b>Last heard 52 sec ago at 23:59 UTC</b>	<b>Last heard 1 min ago at 23:59 UTC</b>



# PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

- Radio
  - HF most common
  - May use VHF/UHF if desired
    - No repeaters
    - Satellite/ISS allowed
- Adjust to your operating style
  - Hiking in? Go lite!





# PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

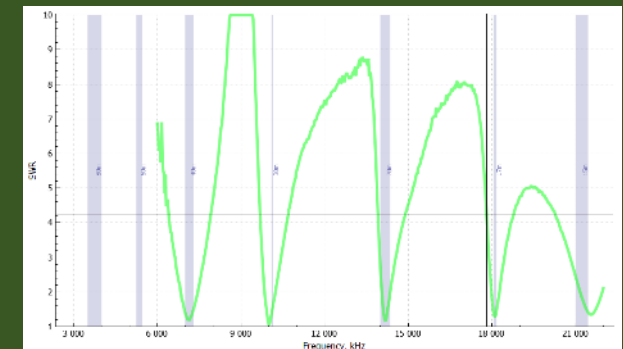
- Power
  - Anything goes, even available 110AC
  - Gas generator probably excessive
  - Batteries most common
    - LiFePO4 light w/~80% usable capacity
    - Rough rule of thumb: 5Ah/hr/100W power setting
    - 12 Ah LiFePO4 good for ~1:45 - 2 hrs
  - Cut power in half = only 0.5 S-unit loss
  - Measure use w/in-line power meter
  - Anderson PowerPoles a good choice





# PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

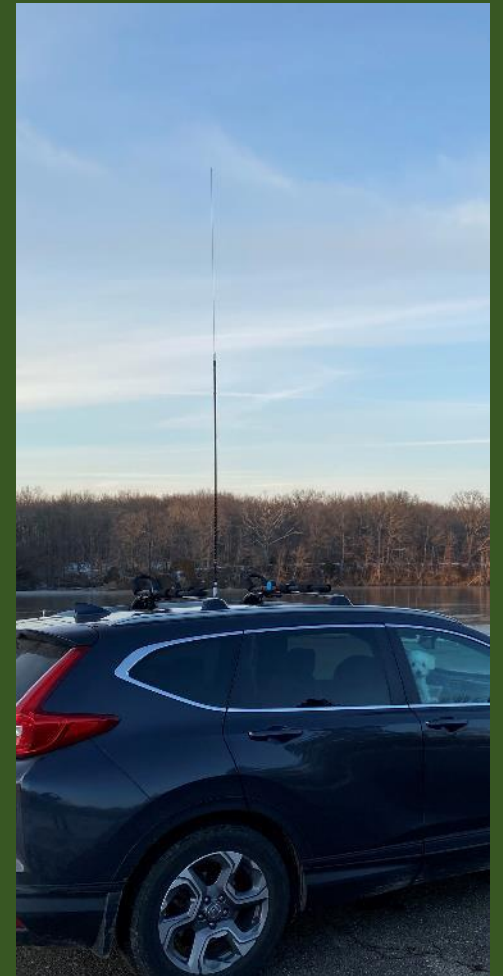
- Antennas
  - NUMEROUS options!
  - Adapt to location and style
  - Consider support structure (self-supporting, trees, in car)
  - Low power? Resonant is best choice
  - Common choices:
    - End-Fed Halfwave or “Random”
    - Dipole / inverted vee
    - Multiband vertical





# PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

- Antennas
  - Common choices (cont.):
    - Coil-loaded, such as the Wolf River Coil products
    - Hamsticks (don't underestimate!)
- Feedline
  - Coax most convenient
  - Short runs (<50') = low loss
  - Feedline choke may help w/stray RF
  - Not always needed (feed directly from radio)





# PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

- Cases / transportation
  - Hard case
  - Soft case / backpack
  - Economize!
  - Hiking? Small kit can fit in a fanny pack!
- All other accessories
  - Cables, connectors, spare cables, tools, tape, zip ties, head mic, key
- Personal care items
  - 1<sup>st</sup> aid kit, bug spray, sun screen, gloves/hat, food, water, towels





# PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

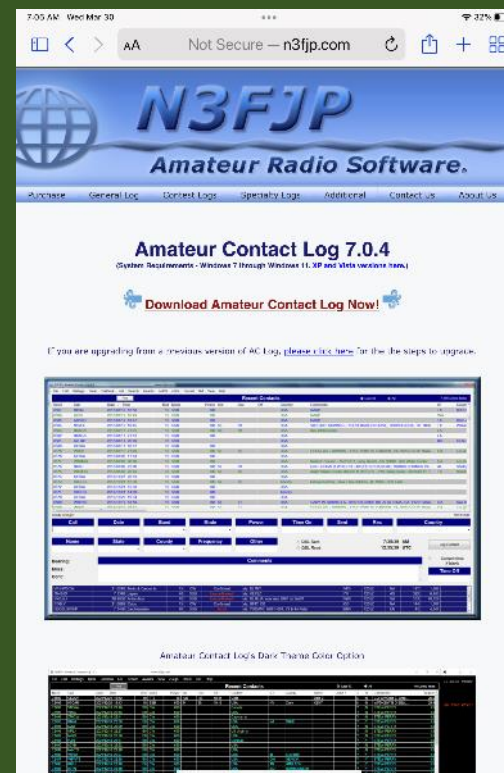
- Pro tips
  - Arborist throw line, rope, and weight – great way to get antenna in a tree (50-70')
  - Use kite winders ("figure 8") to store wire antennas
  - "Over-under" method for coax, bundles of radials, etc.





# LOGGING SOFTWARE

- Your choice!
- Be sure it generates ADI file with needed fields
- Common Options:
  - N3FJP's AC Log (Windows)
  - HAMRS (All platforms)
  - N1MM Plus (Windows)
  - RUMLog (Mac/iOS)
  - Custom spreadsheets
  - FLE - Fast Log Entry
  - ADIF Master (great to check ADIFs)

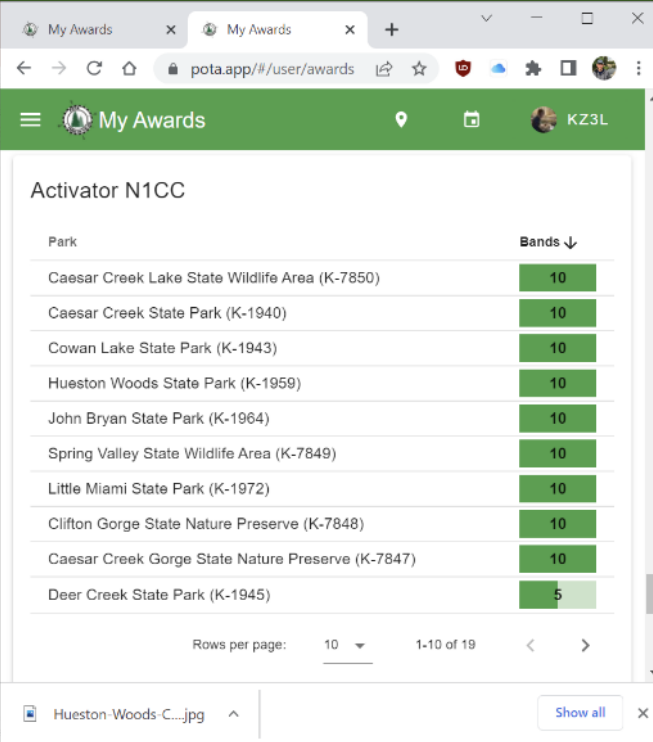
The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for logging a contact. The header displays the call sign 'KZ3L@K-7849-20220327'. The form includes fields for 'THEIR CALLSIGN', 'RST SENT', 'RST RCVD', 'THEIR PARK', 'COMMENTS', 'TIME', 'DATE', 'OPERATOR', 'STATE', 'COUNTY', 'FREQUENCY', 'BAND', 'POWER (W)', 'MODE', 'MY PARK', 'MY CALLSIGN', 'MY GRID', 'CLUB CALLSIGN', 'MY STATE', and 'MY COUNTY'. There are buttons for 'Clear', 'Save', and 'Entries'. At the bottom, there is a search bar and a list of entries with columns for DATE, CALLSIGN, RST, STATE, FREQUENCY, BAND, MODE, and THEIR PARK.The screenshot shows the ADIFMaster application window. The title bar indicates the file path: 'C:\Users\kwc\Documents\Nextcloud - Docume...'. The application has a menu bar (File, Edit, Search, View, Tools, Settings, Help) and a toolbar with various icons. The main area displays a table of log entries with columns: Line, QSO\_DATE, TIME\_ON, BAND, CALL, OPERATOR, FREQ, MODE, MY\_CNTY, and MY. The table contains 19 rows of data, each representing a contact log entry.

Line	QSO_DATE	TIME_ON	BAND	CALL	OPERATOR	FREQ	MODE	MY_CNTY	MY
1	20220327	195635	40m	KG8YT	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
2	20220327	195847	40m	WS4S	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
3	20220327	200034	40m	K8RL	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
4	20220327	200118	40m	WA3TVH	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
5	20220327	200227	40m	W2MSA	KZ3L	7.043	CW	WARREN	EM
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# AWARDS

- Automated – based on activator log
- Numerous – for activators & hunters
  - # parks, # activations, # park-to-parks, repeat activations/hunted, “kilo,” multiple parks/day, 10-band, etc.
  - Thresholds start early and build (10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 75, 100, 500, 1000...)
- Download from pota.app
- May take 1-4 weeks to appear
- Excellent progress tracker



My Awards

Activator N1CC

Park	Bands ↓
Caesar Creek Lake State Wildlife Area (K-7850)	10
Caesar Creek State Park (K-1940)	10
Cowan Lake State Park (K-1943)	10
Hueston Woods State Park (K-1959)	10
John Bryan State Park (K-1964)	10
Spring Valley State Wildlife Area (K-7849)	10
Little Miami State Park (K-1972)	10
Clifton Gorge State Nature Preserve (K-7848)	10
Caesar Creek Gorge State Nature Preserve (K-7847)	10
Deer Creek State Park (K-1945)	5

Rows per page: 10 1-10 of 19

Hueston Woods C...jpg Show all



Bronze Activator



Silver Activator



Gold Activator



Platinum Activator



Diamond Activator



Bronze Hunter



Silver Hunter



Gold Hunter



# Howard's Spectacular Thelypody



500

Activator Award

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

## ALL STATES

HUNTER AWARD



Created by  
Eddie Leighton,  
ZS6BNE

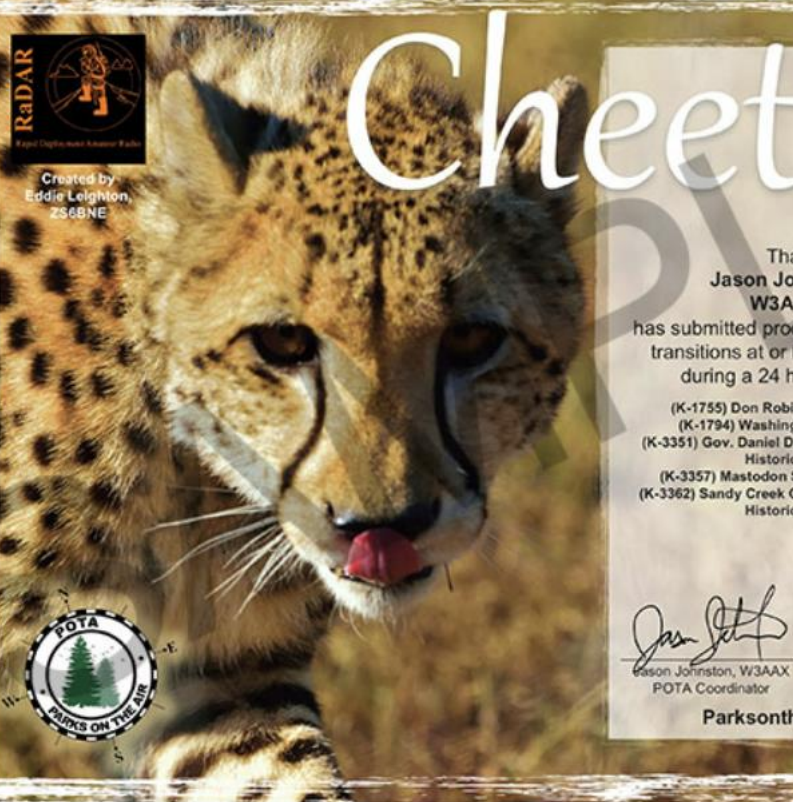


Photo: Dalton Jackson via Wikimedia Commons

## Cheetah

The  
Jason Johnston, W3AA  
has submitted proof of having at least 10 QSOs from the same Parks on the Air entity more than 20 times.

(K-1755) Don Robb  
(K-1794) Washington  
(K-3351) Gov. Daniel DeFoe  
Historic  
(K-3357) Mastodon State  
(K-3362) Sandy Creek  
Historic



Jason Johnston, W3AA  
POTA Coordinator

Parks on the Air



## OASIS

(K-1940)

Caesar Creek State Park

Entity

05/25/2021

Date

Jason Johnston, W3AA, POTA Coordinator

Photo: By Sfrivat (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



That  
Kevin Culp  
KZ3L

has submitted proof of having at least 10 QSOs from the same Parks on the Air entity more than 20 times.



## late shift

00:00z and 12:00z.

Jason Johnston, W3AA, POTA Coordinator

Jason Johnston, W3AA, POTA Coordinator

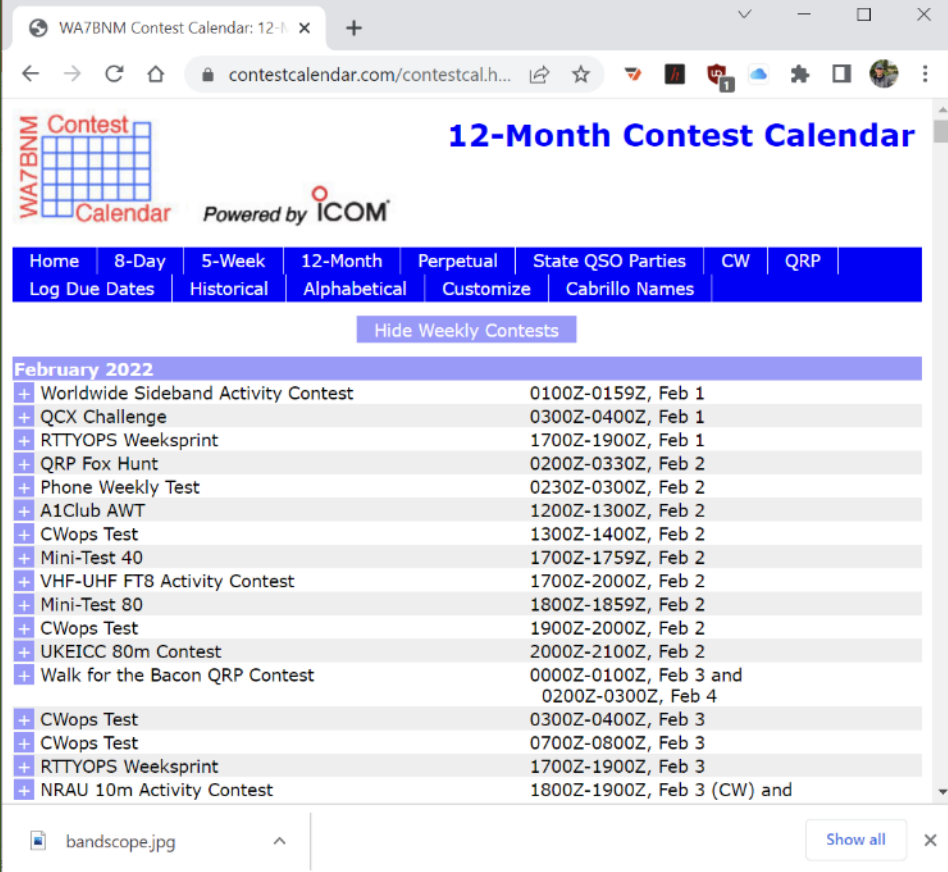
03/28/2021

Date



# SPECIAL TOPICS

- Handling Nets and QRM
  - Always take the high road!
  - No one “owns” a freq, but be a good ambassador for the program
  - Deliberate QRM does happen
- Contests: Can't beat 'em? Join 'em!
  - Or go to WARC bands or other modes
  - <http://contestcalendar.com>
- Always submit logs! Hunters want parks



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying "contestcalendar.com/contestcal.h...". The page title is "WA7BNM Contest Calendar: 12-Month Contest Calendar". The page features a navigation bar with links: Home, 8-Day, 5-Week, 12-Month, Perpetual, State QSO Parties, CW, QRP, Log Due Dates, Historical, Alphabetical, Customize, and Cabrillo Names. A "Hide Weekly Contests" button is visible. The main content area lists contests for February 2022, including Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest, QCX Challenge, RTTYOPS Weekspint, QRP Fox Hunt, Phone Weekly Test, A1Club AWT, CWops Test, Mini-Test 40, VHF-UHF FT8 Activity Contest, Mini-Test 80, CWops Test, UKEICC 80m Contest, Walk for the Bacon QRP Contest, and several CWops Test entries. The contests are listed with their respective time slots and dates.

February 2022	
+ Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest	0100Z-0159Z, Feb 1
+ QCX Challenge	0300Z-0400Z, Feb 1
+ RTTYOPS Weekspint	1700Z-1900Z, Feb 1
+ QRP Fox Hunt	0200Z-0330Z, Feb 2
+ Phone Weekly Test	0230Z-0300Z, Feb 2
+ A1Club AWT	1200Z-1300Z, Feb 2
+ CWops Test	1300Z-1400Z, Feb 2
+ Mini-Test 40	1700Z-1759Z, Feb 2
+ VHF-UHF FT8 Activity Contest	1700Z-2000Z, Feb 2
+ Mini-Test 80	1800Z-1859Z, Feb 2
+ CWops Test	1900Z-2000Z, Feb 2
+ UKEICC 80m Contest	2000Z-2100Z, Feb 2
+ Walk for the Bacon QRP Contest	0000Z-0100Z, Feb 3 and 0200Z-0300Z, Feb 4
+ CWops Test	0300Z-0400Z, Feb 3
+ CWops Test	0700Z-0800Z, Feb 3
+ RTTYOPS Weekspint	1700Z-1900Z, Feb 3
+ NRAU 10m Activity Contest	1800Z-1900Z, Feb 3 (CW) and



# SPECIAL TOPICS

- Multi-Op activations
  - Share the mic or key
    - Ops all get POTA credit
    - Follow FCC ID rules
    - Submit separate logs
  - Simultaneous
    - Operate on different bands
    - Separate antennas from each other as far as practical
    - Use band-pass filters



## Low Band Systems PB-F200-7 - Low Band Systems HF Transmit Band Pass Filters

Filter, Bandpass, 40 meters, 200 W, Each

Part Number: LBS-PB-F200-7

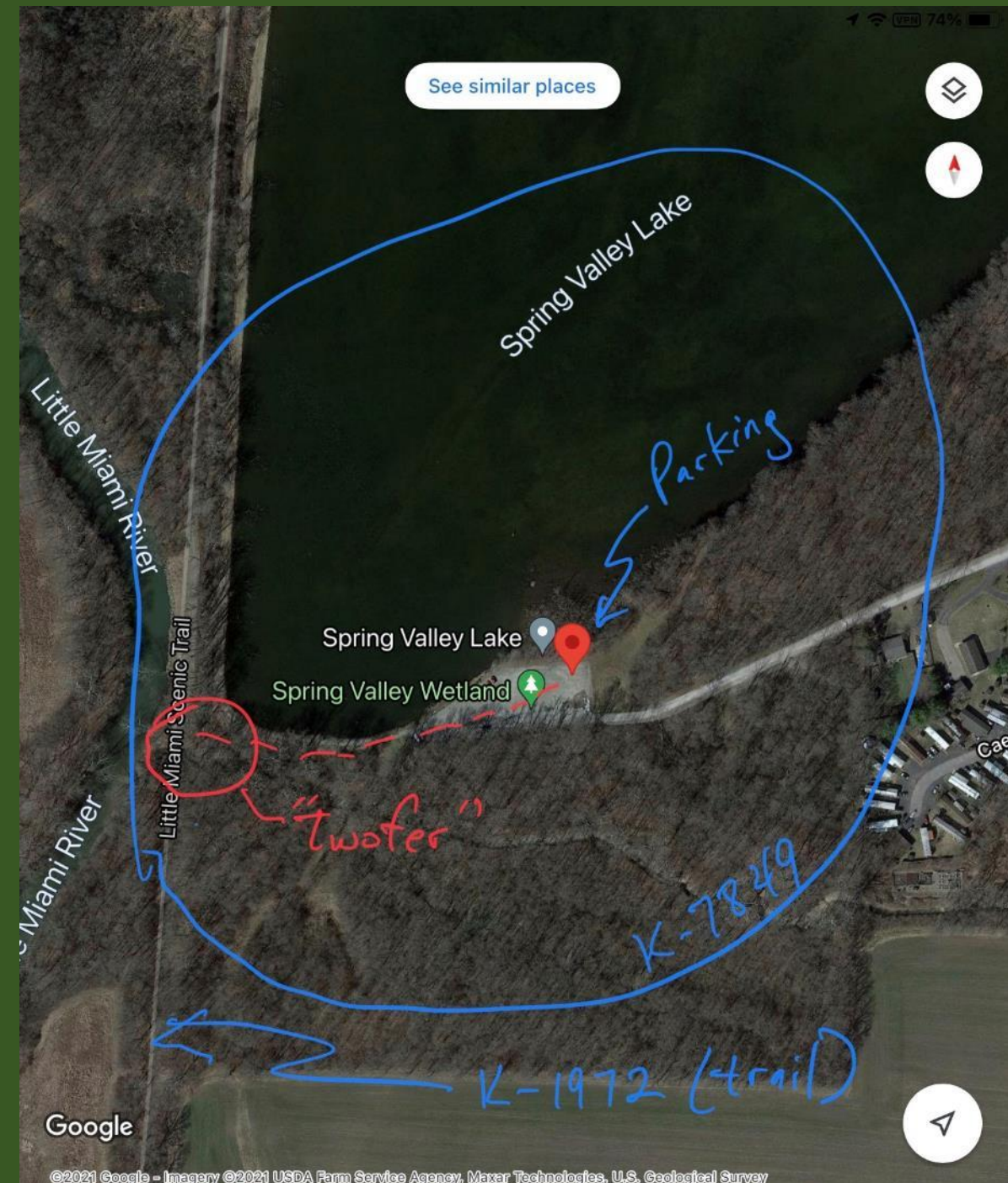
★★★★★ (6)

DX ENGINEERING



# Special Topics

- Multi-Park activations
  - “two-fer,” “three-fer,” ...
  - Park-within-a-park
  - In a park and w/in 100’ of trail
  - Any combination of above
  - Every QSO counts for each park
  - Submit separate logs for each park





# GETTING STARTED

- Register at <http://pota.app>
- Visit <http://parksontheair.com>
  - Read FAQs and guides
  - Watch videos
- Practice hunting & listen to other activators
- Join POTA Facebook Group and Slack channel – great communities!
  - See info on <http://parksontheair.com>
- HAVE A HAM GOOD TIME!!!







# Questions?

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JACK KIBELBEK, N8EU – [JACK45458@YAHOO.COM](mailto:JACK45458@YAHOO.COM)

