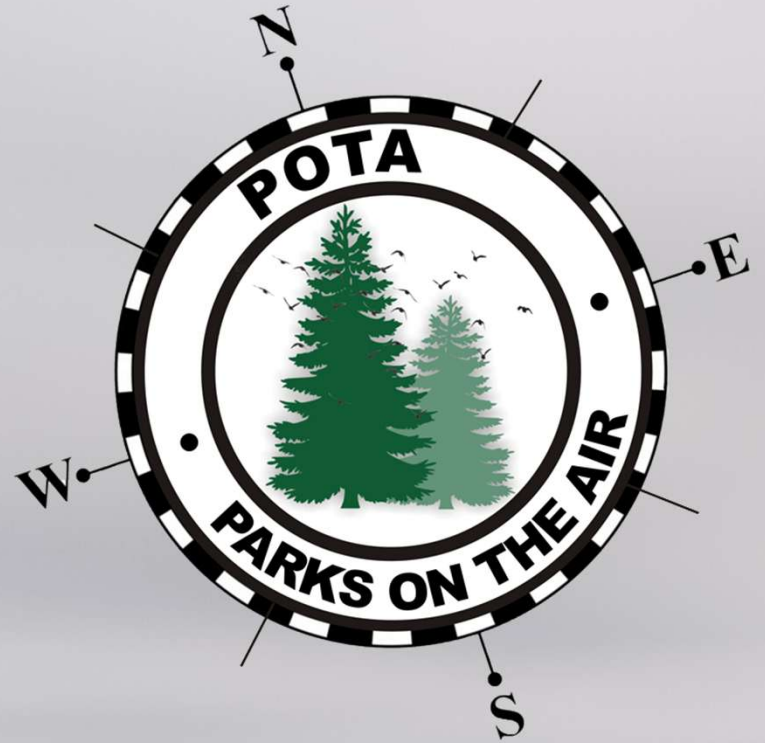


POTA

Get out and go!

Robert Butera KM4MK

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What is POTA?

- Operate your radio from a park
- Portable and outdoor focused
- Worldwide participation



Why Do It?

- Get outdoors
- Skill Building
 - Portable operation skills
 - Antenna experimentation and experience
 - Put beginner CW skills to use
 - Situational skills
- Club activity – every day is field day!*
- Happens every day, no schedule
- Better options than your QTH!
- Award challenges

* “every day is field day” is a registered Trademark of HAMRS

How to Do It

- **Activator** – operator who sets up at a designated POTA park and operates
 - Go to a listed park
 - Make QSOs and log them
 - All modes: SSB, CW, Digital
 - Upload logs to <https://pota.app>
- **Hunter** – someone sitting at their QTH (or anywhere) making contact with activators
 - Make contacts with activators
 - No logs to upload
 - Many still appreciate QSO confirmations

Have you done POTA?

- 10 BARC members have **activated** POTA parks
 - 276 activations
 - 9896 QSOs
- 21 BARC members have **hunted** POTA parks
 - 5078 unique parks hunted
 - 7614 QSOs

(cross referencing membership roster with profiles/summary log data at <https://pota.app>, data accurate as of 2026-04-26)

How to Activate

- Lookup parks on POTA website (pota.app)
 - State Parks/Forests/WMA's
 - National Parks/Forests/Historic Sites
 - State/National trails w park designation (e.g. Cape Cod Rail Trail)
- Travel there. Use links on POTA park description page for local information. Ask for local info on the POTA Facebook group.
- Entire setup (you, radio, antenna, cables) must be within boundaries of the park. Trails have a "100 foot" rule.
- Make QSOs
- Common but optional:
 - Call "CQ POTA"
 - Self-spot on POTA website
- 10 or more QSOs is a successful "activation"
- Upload QSOs to POTA website when convenient
- Log your full contacts as you normally do (e.g. LoTW or QRZ)

How to Hunt

- Listen for people calling “CQ POTA”
- The POTA website has a spotting page
- Many spotting sites also identify POTA
- Confirm contacts as usual (e.g. LoTW or QRZ)
- No need to log or upload anything to POTA website. All stats and awards are based on activator uploads.
- More tools discussed later

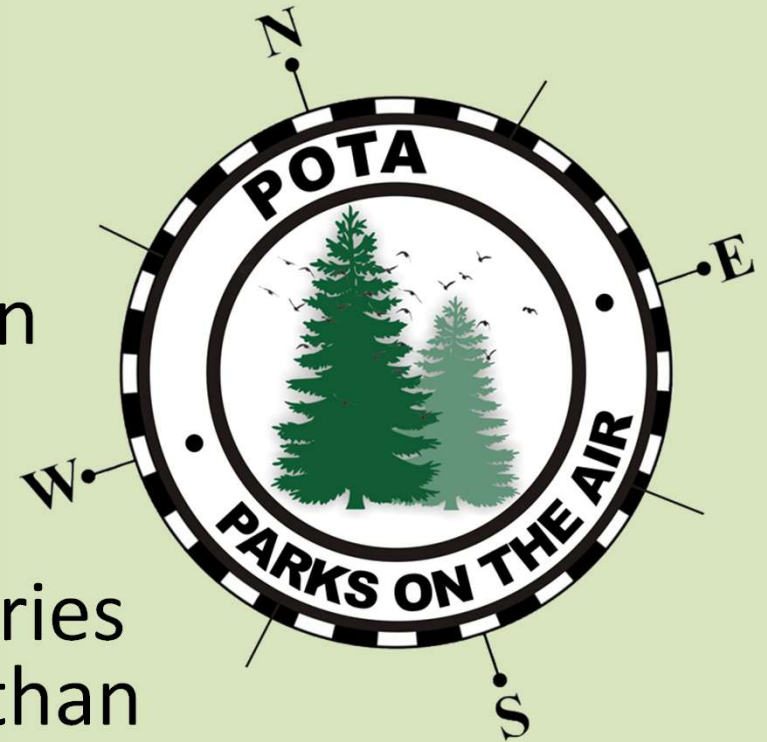
QSO Requirements

- **There is no required QSO format!** It is not a contest, just a logging of contacts. Activator uploads basic contact information.
- Most activators ...
 - will call “CQ POTA”
 - will exchange signal reports
 - will indicate their park BUT
 - **None of these are required.**
- Example: I did the CQ WPX contest from the Marconi Beach parking lot. Nobody knew or cared that I was operating from a park, but they are still contacts I made while operating from a listed POTA park.
- Example *activator/hunter*: One could also “activate” by not calling CQ at all and just hunting parks – **from a park** – and making “park to park” contacts (see next page)

POTA Lingo

Park to Park when one POTA activator responds to the CQ of another POTA activator. Park numbers are exchanged between the operators*

2-fer overlapping park boundaries where one is “activating” more than one park at the same time. There are even examples of 3-fers and 4-fers ...



<https://pota.app>

- Find parks and links to park info
- See upcoming activations
- Spot your activation or parks you hunted
- Stats on your hunting and activating
- Awards
- Excellent documentation! Look at <https://www.parksontheair.com>
- Excellent 24/7 tech support by volunteers!
- Create an account if you are an activator to upload logs, optional for hunters but tracks awards



Parks on the Air

Docs Home

[Rules](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Activator Reference](#)

[Hunter Guide](#)

[CW Guide](#)

[Digital Modes Guide](#)

[Events](#)

[Awards](#)

[Video Resources](#)

[Support](#)

[Resources and Documents](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Volunteers](#)

Active Spots

Data will refresh in 17 seconds. ||

At a park now?

ADD SPOT

Band: 20M 66

Mode: SSB 48

Program: All 94

QRT: Hide 85

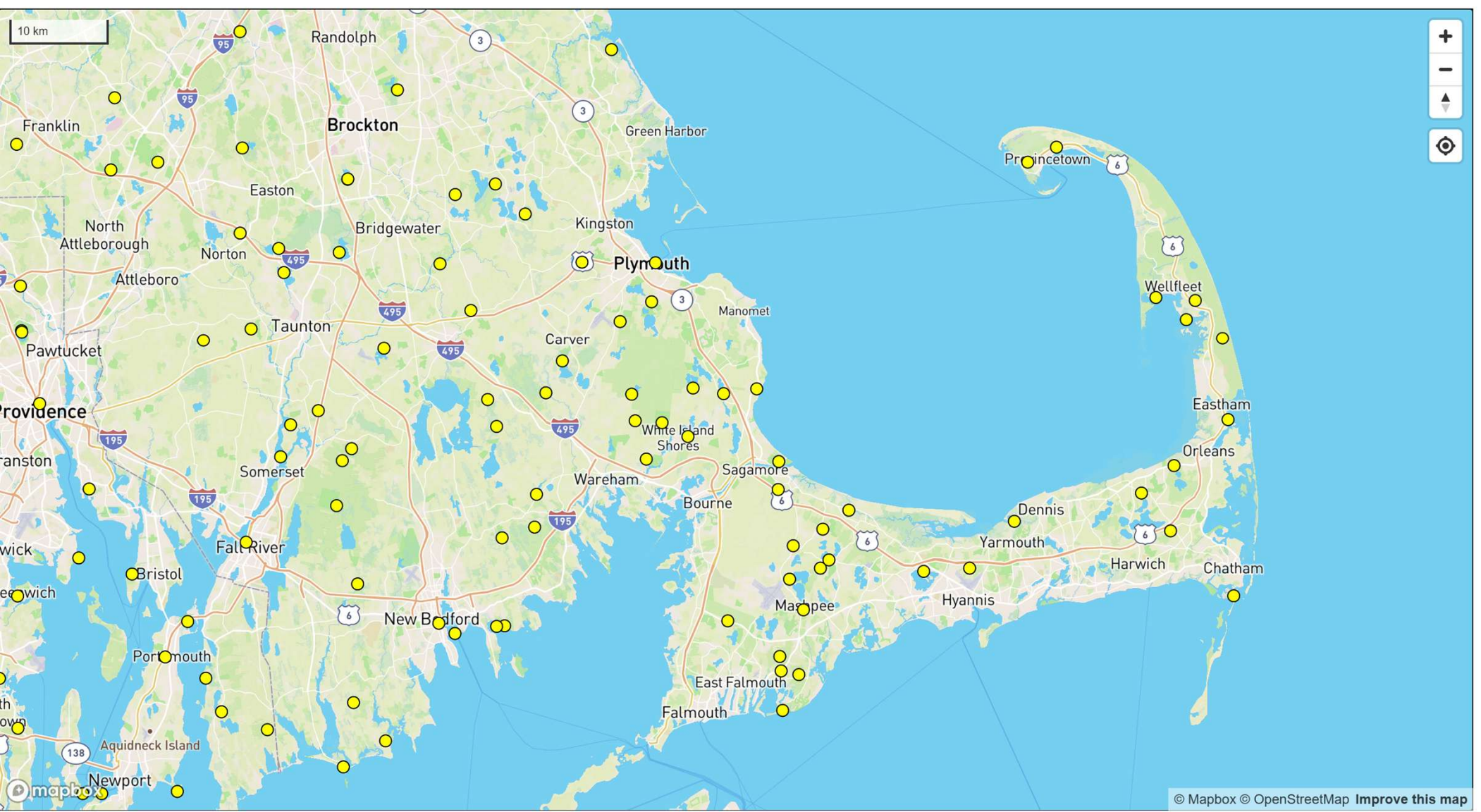
Hunted: Hide 94

Sort: Frequency

KJ7KVD @ US-3291 US-3291 Yakima Sportsman State Park US-WA 14062.5 kHz KJ7KVD QRP Last heard 39 sec ago at 18:22 UTC
--

RE-SPOT

9



Mashpee Pine Barrens Wildlife Management Area

Reference:

US-11674

Entity:

United States of America

Location(s):

US-MA

Latitude / Longitude:

41.5858, -70.4879 (FN41so)

Early Shift Award Times:

7:00 UTC to 13:00 UTC

Late Shift Award Times:

23:00 UTC to 7:00 UTC

Website:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mashpee-pine-barrens-w...>

Access Methods:

Automobile

Foot

Activation Methods:

Automobile

Pedestrian

Is Active?

ACTIVE

First Activation:

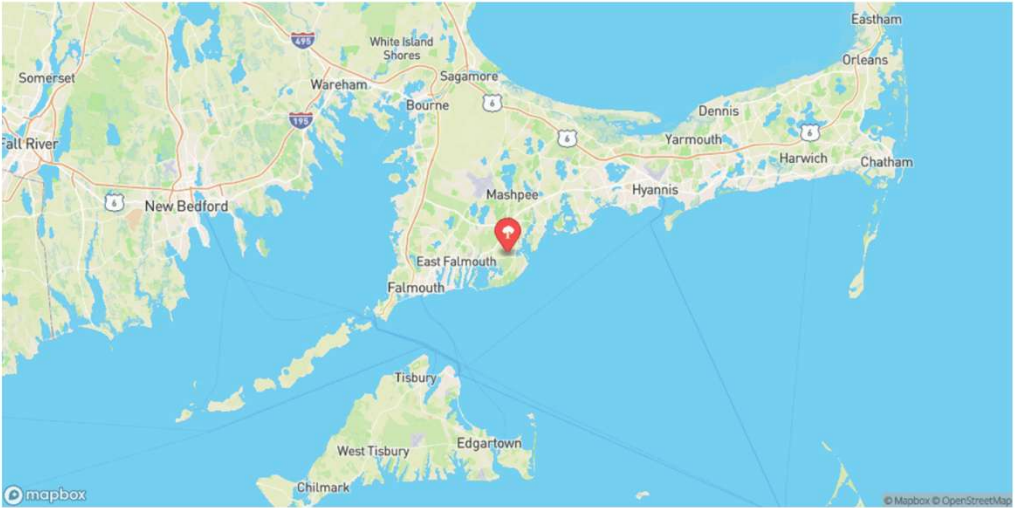
W1WCM on 2024-06-18

Stats:

29 activations / 30 attempts (778 QSOs)

Park Leaders

	Activations		Activator QSOs		Hunter QSOs	
1.	W1WCM	19	W1WCM	549	NJ9L	6
2.	KB1NNH	2	KB1NNH	85	KT5H	6



Activations

Date	Callsign	CW	Data	Phone	Total QSOs
2026-04-26	W1WCM	0	0	20	20
2026-04-14	KM4MK	0	0	31	31
2026-01-07	W1WCM	0	0	22	22
2025-11-18	WC1N	14	0	0	14
2025-10-03	W1WCM	0	0	18	18
2025-09-18	WA2GOT	0	0	14	14
2025-08-30	W1WCM	0	0	13	13
2025-08-06	KO4JBC	0	14	0	14

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					

Activate a park in 50 states (DC is a wildcard) to earn this award.

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					

Hunt a park in 50 states (DC is a wildcard) to earn this award.

Activated All References

Location	Progress ↓
Georgia (US-GA)	20 / 237
Massachusetts (US-MA)	17 / 421
Rhode Island (US-RI)	1 / 61
South Carolina (US-SC)	1 / 166

Rows per page: 10 1-4 of 4 < >

Activate all of the parks in a state/province/region to earn this award.

Hunted All References

Location	Progress ↓
Saint George (BB-GE)	1 / 3
Turks and Caicos Islands (TC-TC)	1 / 7
Saint Michael (BB-MI)	2 / 14
Texas (US-TX)	31 / 221
Florida (US-FL)	63 / 460
Georgia (US-GA)	32 / 237
South Carolina (US-SC)	20 / 166
Barahona (DO-BH)	1 / 10
North Carolina (US-NC)	25 / 253
District Of Columbia (US-DC)	3 / 32

Rows per page: 10 1-10 of 62 < >

Hunt all of the parks in a state/province/region to earn this award.

Kilo

Park	Contacts ↓
Cape Cod National Seashore (US-0672)	1474
Marconi Wildlife Management Area (US-11638)	1015
Nickerson State Park (US-2451)	823
Cape Cod Rail Trail State Trail (US-8395)	385

Rows per page: 10 1-4 of 4 < >

Have 1000 total contacts from a single park as an activator.

Approaches to Activating

- **Vehicle bound**
- Setup and talk
- Take a hike



Approaches to Activating

- Vehicle bound
- **Setup and talk**
- Take a hike



(photo of Chris W8CJL from the KM1CC FB page)

Approaches to Activating

- Vehicle bound
- Setup and talk
- **Take a hike**



Antenna Options

- Dipole
- Verticals
- EFHW
- Resonant vs non-resonant
- Trendy this year ...
 - POTA performer (vertical w elevated radials)
 - Hextenna/V dipoles



Antenna Support

- Vehicle mounts
- Telescoping poles
 - vehicle bound
 - free-standing
- Surveyor tripods
- Line in a tree



Access to a Park

- Car access
- Hike-in activations (I am planning a boat-in ...)
- Follow park rules ... use FB page to ask for local info (state rules and actual enforcement practices vary)
- When to attract attention and when not to ...
- POTA page on park has links to park info online, usually including access

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Automobile

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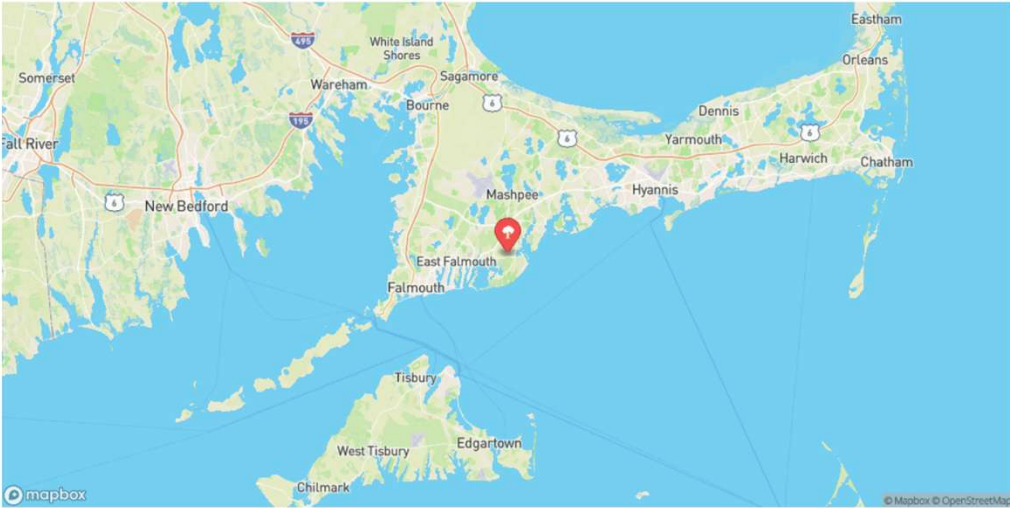
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POTA Log vs QSO Log

- **The POTA site is not a confirmation service. Only activators upload logs. There is no matching of QSOs (except Park-to-Park)**
- POTA only requires a minimal ADIF file
 - Operator, call, date, time, band, mode
 - Optional but useful: MY_SIG (POTA), MY_SIG_INFO (park number), MY_STATE (for multi-state parks)
 - For Park-to-Park contacts: SIG (POTA), SIG_INFO (park number, like US-0672)
- Popular POTA loggers will generate these, there are also online tools and XLS sheets

Tools for Activators

- <https://pota.app>
- Typical loggers (N3FJP, N1MM) are annoying for POTA. Also I don't want to bring a laptop.
- Logging software designed for activators:
 - HAMRS <https://hamrs.app/> (Mac, Windows, Linux, Android, iOS)
 - POLO Ham2K <https://polo.ham2k.com/> (iOS, Android)
 - World Radio League <https://worldradioleague.com/> (web, iOS, Android)
- XLS spread sheet w macros for creating POTA ADIF from paper logs https://morsel.info/?page_id=852
- POTA Facebook Group

Tools for Hunters

- POTACAT provides hamlib-based cat control combined with POTA and SOTA spotting. Plays well with all major loggers <https://potacat.com/>
- Ham Alert (<https://hamalert.org/>) has POTA-specific notifications for its spotting services. E.g. “only notify me if a park in Hawaii is spotted ...”
- Gridtracker also has POTA specific spots <https://gridtracker.org/>

My Advice

- Start with a simple antenna (1/4-wave vertical or inverted V dipole or EFHW)
- Start with an easy location for parking and operating
- Practice setup to takedown at home first! Avoids mistakes or forgotten items
- If you have a general license and operate HF, you likely own most of what you need. **Battery** and **portable antenna** are the two common purchases.
- LiFePO4 batteries (e.g. Bioenno) are great for power vs size
- Turnkey POTA specific antennas are available at a price

Easy POTA spots

- Cape Cod National Seashore US-0672
 - Designated picnic areas (I like Doane Rock, trees near tables and protected from wind by trees)
 - Marconi Beach parking lot (2fer! Also Marconi Beach WMA US-11638)
- Nickerson State Park US-2451
 - Picnic areas and parking lots all over the park
 - Bike trail parking lot off 6A is a 2-fer if you park in row along bike trail (US-8395 Cape Cod Rail Trail State Trail) which is well within 100 feet of trail

Want a follow up talk?

- Talk through actual setups with photos
- Possibly recruit multiple speakers?