

POTA=FIELD DAY=EMCOM



8/15/26

POTA – WHAT IS IT?



- **Parks on the Air®**
- **Radiosport program that encourages hams to get out and communicate from designated parks**
- **All Bands – All Modes**
- **Spinoff from the ARRL 2017 National Parks on the Air special event**
 - **Group of volunteers wanted it to continue**
- **Field Day and Emcom practice whenever you want!**

INTRODUCTION



- Started as US National Parks – expanded to include National Forests, National Trails, State Parks, National Battlefields, etc.
 - Must be a National or State-owned area

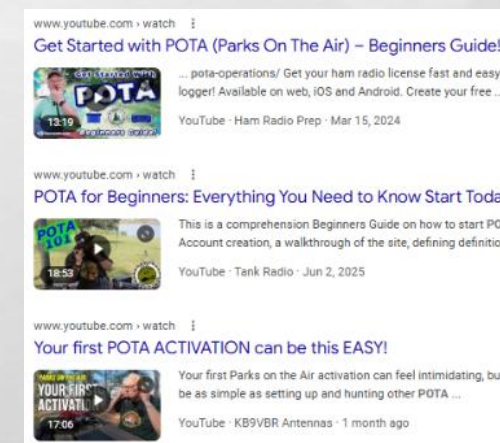


- Expanded to almost every country in the world
 - Afghanistan has 7 POTA parks

FAST GROWING SEGMENT OF THE HOBBY

- **13201 Parks in the US**
 - 184 in VA, 850 in NY, 32 in DC
- **Paired with FT8/FT4**
- **Why?**
 - Gets you out of the shack into fresh air
 - Challenges your technical abilities and equipment
- **Can be done from your car!**

Reference	Park
US-0016	Colonial National Historical Park
US-0019	Cumberland Gap National Historical Park
US-0064	Shenandoah National Park
US-0560	Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge
US-0561	Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
US-0562	Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge
US-0563	Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge
US-0564	Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge
US-0565	Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge
US-0566	Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge



5

WHY ACTIVATE?

- GET OUT OF YOUR SHACK - EXPLORE NEW PLACES
- INTRODUCE AMATEUR RADIO WITH PASSERSBY
- PRACTICE SETTING UP A STATION AND OPERATING AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS AND CONDITIONS
- EXPERIMENTING WITH DIFFERENT ANTENNAS
- TYPICAL LOWER NOISE FLOOR
- GAIN EXPERIENCE OPERATING
- HONE YOUR SKILLS FOR CONTESTING / PILEUPS
- WALLPAPER FOR YOUR SHACK!

Loudoun Amateur Radio Group (LARG)

K4LRG

has submitted 25 park-to-park

QSOs with 25 Parks on the Air entities.

Dick Parent

25

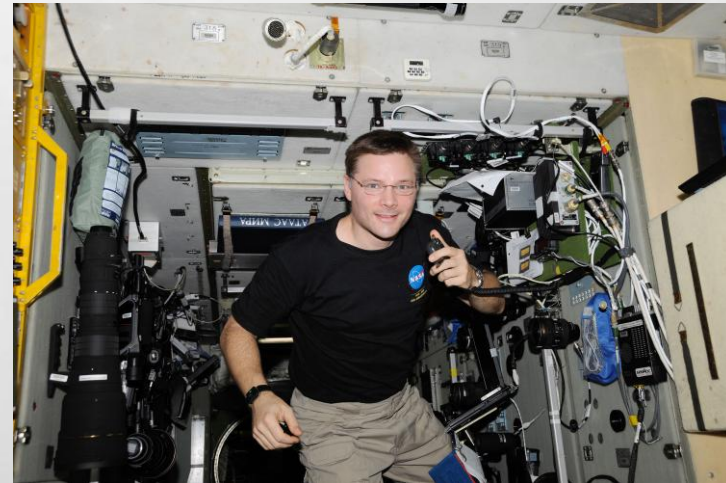
GETTING STARTED



- Read the rules / operating information at <https://docs.pota.app/>
- Create an account at <https://parksontheair.com/>
 - Needed to upload your logs, see your status and get your wallpaper
- For POTA – 2 paths
 - Activator
 - Hunter

DEFINITIONS

- **Activator**
 - Operators that pack up their gear, head out to a park and operate
- **Hunters**
 - Operators worldwide who contact *Activators*
 - Can be in another Park – for a Park to Park contact



- Operate from where ever your station is at
 - Normally your QTH
- How to find activator
 - Troll the bands
 - <https://pota.app> → Spots Page
 - Lists activators who have been 'spotted'

Active Spots Data will refresh in 55 seconds. ||

Band: All 76 Mode: All 76 Program: All 76 QRT: Show 76 Hunted: Show 76 Sort: Time

 CT1END/P @ PT-0014 	 AE0XJ @ US-11701 	 W8TAM @ 
 PT-0014 Costa Sudoeste Natura 2000	 US-11701 Wood-Rill SNA State Sanctuary	 US-2328 W
 PT-BE, + 2	 US-MN	 US-IA
 14080.0 kHz (FT4)	 14081 kHz (FT4)	 21140.0 kHz
 S50U-#	 K17DAN	 W1NT-6-#
 RBN -14 dB via S50U-#	 FT4 Sent: -04 Rcvd: +01	 RBN -17 dB
 Last heard 16 sec ago at 19:42 UTC	 Last heard 19 sec ago at 19:42 UTC	 Last heard 2
 	 	

HUNTER



- **Filter by:**
 - Band
 - Mode
 - Country (Program)
 - QRT
- **Sort by:**
 - Time
 - Freq
 - Park Name
 - Mode
 - Reference
 - Region

The screenshot shows the 'Parks on the Air' interface. A red box highlights the main content area. Blue arrows point from text labels on the right to specific fields in the interface.

Field	Description
K7TPK @ US-9980	Activator Callsign - Park #
US-9980 Willamette River Greenway and Water State Trail	Park # - Park Name
US-OR	Park Location
14324 kHz	Operating Frequency
K7TPK	Last Spotted by – himself!
CQ SSB	Spotter entered notes
Last heard 2 mins ago at 22:13 UTC	Last heard – Last spotted

Buttons at the bottom: RE-SPOT, 1

HUNTER



- If you work an Activator – please ‘Re-Spot’ them
- This way other hunters know they are still active

Parks on the Air

K7TPK @ US-9980

US-9980 Willamette River Greenway and Water State Trail

US-OR

14324 kHz

K7TPK

CQ SSB

Last heard 2 mins ago at 22:13 UTC

RE-SPOT

Re-Spot

Activator Callsign
K7TPK

Spotter Callsign
AH20

Frequency (kHz)
14324

Park Reference
US-9980

Willamette River Greenway and Water State Trail

Comments

Wrong mode? Mention a mode in the Comments field to change the mode for this spot (e.g. "QSY CW", "RTTY" or "Switching to FT8").

Mention QRT if this activator is no longer on the air to mark this spot as finished.

This spot will be **marked hunted** for this band and mode.

CANCEL SPOT

ACTIVATORS



- Read the rules
- Have a POTA account
- Pick a park – go there and setup
- Simple rules
 - Must be within the park boundary or within 100 ft of a trail
 - Follow instructions from a park ranger – they will stop by and ask
 - Be courteous to others in the park
 - Leave no trace
- Upload your ADIF log once completed

EQUIPMENT



- **Whatever you can haul to the park**
- **Create a checklist of what you want to take**
- **Radio – HF / UHF / VHF**
- **Antenna – portable**
 - **Note: National Parks don't allow stakes or wires in the trees**
 - **Don't forget coax, rope, S-clips, mast, etc. to make it all work**
- **Power – battery, solar – some parks might have shore power**
- **Logging program or paper / writing instrument to record contacts**
- **Phone**
- **Water, food, sunscreen, bug spray, hat, chair, table, etc.**

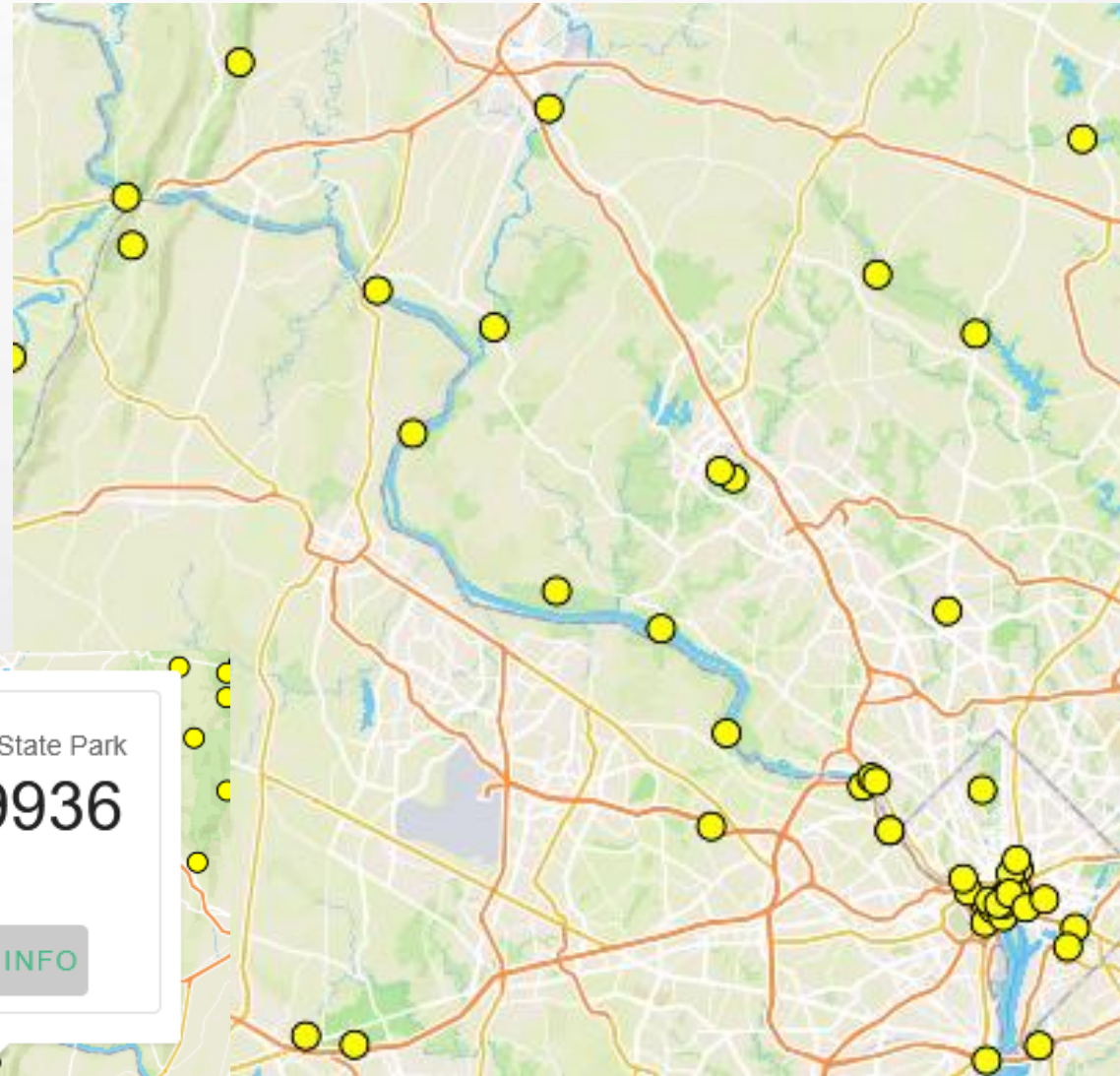
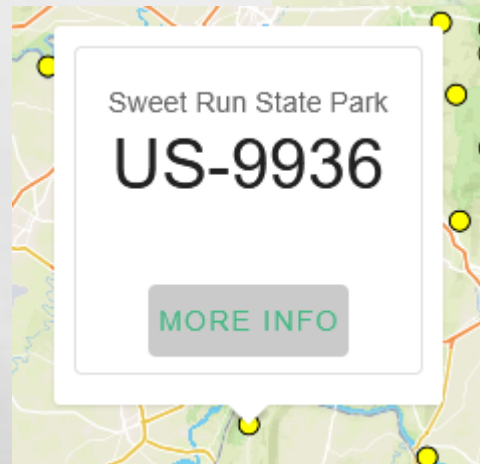
Many Antenna Options

- Numerous options to choose from:
 - Freestanding tripod
 - Wire Antenna
 - Mobile – Mounted to your car
 - Telescoping masts
 - Drive over mast holders
 - etc....



HOW TO FIND A PARK

- Go to <https://pota.app>
- Click on maps
- Yellow dots are parks
- Or search by park name to see if its there



MORE INFO



Sweet Run State Park

Reference:	US-9936
Entity:	United States of America
Location(s):	US-VA
Latitude / Longitude:	39.2934, -77.7251 (FM19dh)
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.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/sweet-run
Access Methods:	Automobile Foot
Activation Methods:	Automobile Pedestrian Sheller
Is Active?	ACTIVE
First Activation:	W3LTR on 2023-10-19
Stats:	91 activations / 93 attempts (3794 QSOs)
Currently no overnight facilities	

Park Leaders

Activations		Activator QSOs		Hunter QSOs	
1.	N4RAF 19	N4RAF 1011	N3VQH 33		
2.	KQ4HKM 7	WV3H 372	K3MET 25		
3.	KB3WAV 3	W3LTR 346	KC3ZMV 25		



Activations

Date	Callsign	CW	Data	Phone	Total QSOs
2026-08-08	W3DFP	0	0	11	11
2026-08-01	WG3Q	0	0	14	14
2026-03-31	N3WT	40	0	0	40
2026-03-29	KQ4HKM	7	0	9	16
2026-02-28	KD2IBT	0	1	42	43
2026-01-02	N3ION	0	21	0	21

PARKS

- Make sure you know the boundaries
- Sometimes there is a park within a park
 - 2-fer
 - Some places can be a 3-, 4-, or 5-fer
- Or two parks next to each other
 - Can't activate both in one session
- Pick the amenities you want / place to setup

POTA CARD
NOVEMBER 4 ROMEO ALPHA FOXTROT
NORWAY 4 RADIO AMERICA FLORIDA

Activation 2 – Parking Lot of LBJ Memorial Grove

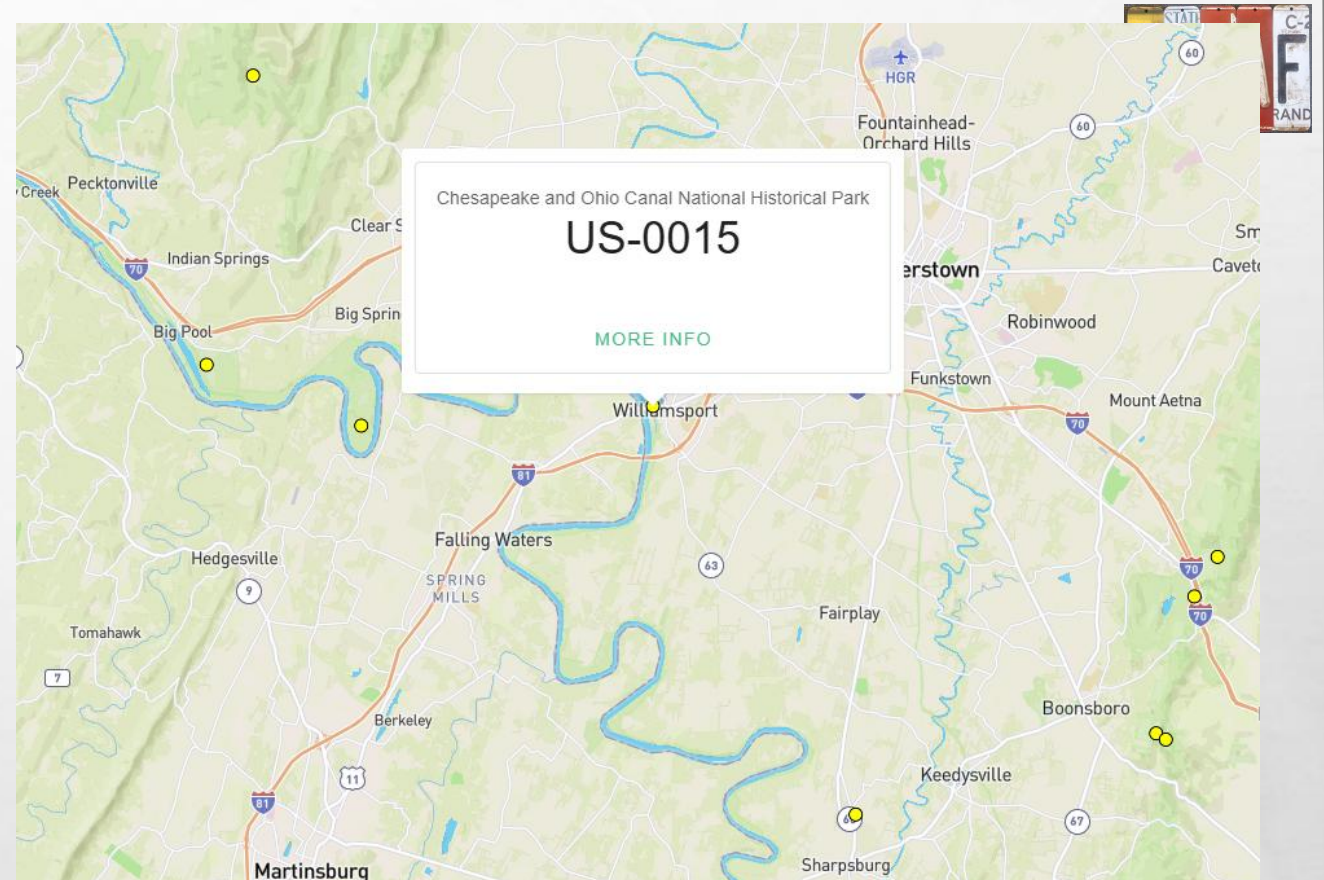
Park Name:	Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
Reference:	K-4581
Location:	US-DC
Lat / Long (Grid)	
Grid	FM18lv

Park Name:	Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Grove on the Potomac National Memorial
Reference:	K-0784
Location:	US-DC
Lat / Long (Grid)	38.8779, -77.0509
Grid	FM18lv

Park Name:	George Washington Memorial Parkway
Reference:	K-0670
Location:	US-DC
Lat / Long (Grid)	
Grid	FM18lv

CAN'T FIND YOUR PARK

- **C&O Canal's yellow dot is near Williamsport MD**
 - But park runs from DC to Cumberland
- **Appalachian trail's dot is in GA near the start**
- **So look in other sources to find park boundaries**



ONCE YOU ARRIVE

- **Pick a good place**
 - Be mindful of kids or people running to antenna / coax
- **Setup / power up**
- **Get ready to log**
 - HAMRs
- **Find your freq**
- **Start calling CQ POTA**



EXCHANGE

- Callsigns
- Signal strength
- Park number(s)
- FT8/4
 - No park number
 - Normal exchange
 - CQ POTA K4LRG

N4RAF



LOGGING AND REPORTING



- **ONLY Activator uploads to pota.app**
 - Hunter **DOES NOT** – but does get credit
 - **ADIF file** – 1 for each park activated
 - **P2P add sig_info column** for their park number
 - One park per row – for 2-fer, 2 rows
 - **10 contacts for an activation**
 - <10 still report so hunter gets credit
 - **QSOs must be in a 24-hour period for an activation**
 - **Can be multiple bands and/modes**
- **Required ADIF fields**
 - STATION_CALLSIGN (Activator Callsign)
 - CALL (Hunter Callsign)
 - QSO_DATE
 - TIME_ON
 - BAND
 - MODE
 - **File naming convention standards**
 - **CALLSIGN@PARK#-yyyymmdd.ad**

MY SETUP



N4RAF



8/16/2026







6P

- **Prior**
- **Planning**
- **Prevents**
- **Piss**
- **Poor**
- **Performance**
- **Forgot Coax**
- **Forgot Antenna**
- **Battery half charged**
- **Uncharged laptop**
- **Forgot my brain (phone)**
- **Didn't google maps scout the park**

POTA SITES IN LOUDOUN COUNTY AND NEARBY

Steve, N4RAF

8/16/2026

Updated from 2024



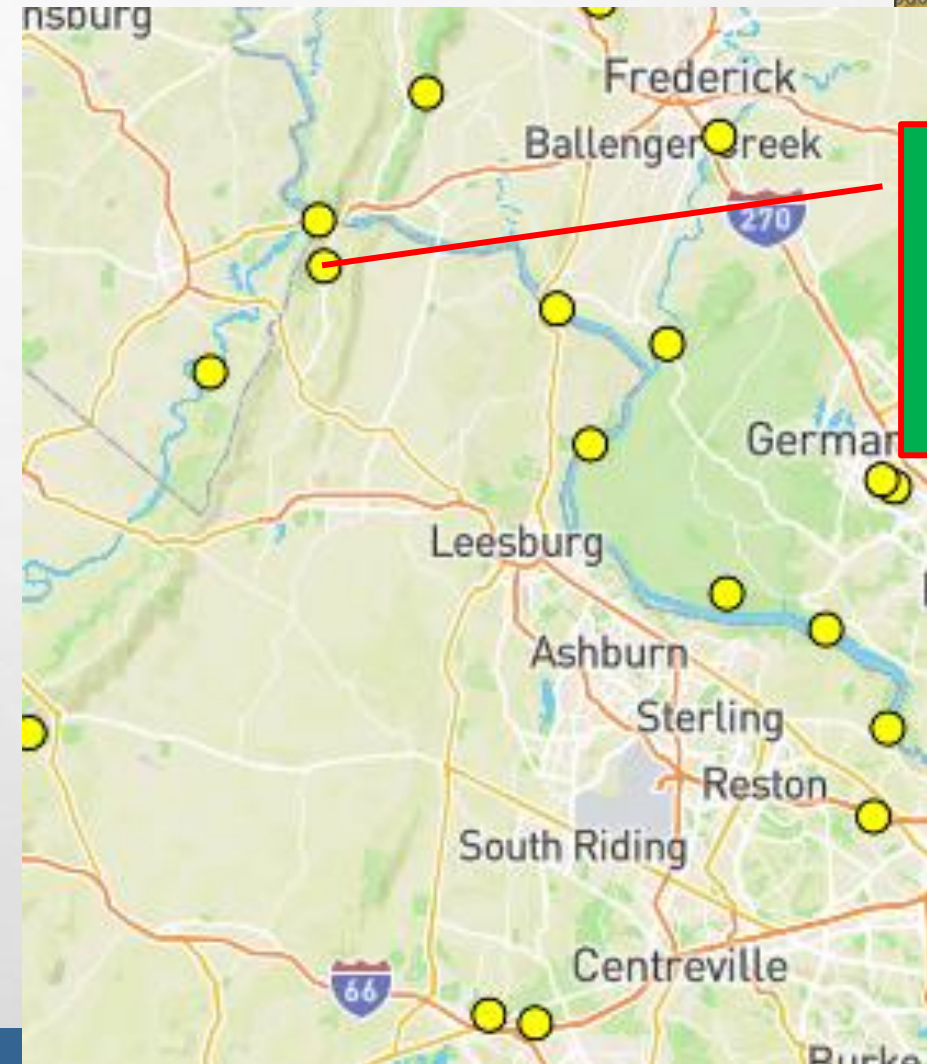


DISCLAIMER

- Per POTA rules – The Operator is responsible for determining park boundaries and operating within those boundaries
- This document is a ‘guide’ showing the possibilities – up to you to verify for your activation
- Make sure you understand all the POTA rules
- Make sure you understand any rules that might apply at the park you activate
 - Many parks do not allow antennas in trees or stakes
- Parks are subject to change – verify at <https://pota.app/#/map>
- Note: POTA changed park prefix from “K-xxxx” to “US-xxxx” about 25 Mar 24
- Please report errors or additions or if you just want to chat about a location to Steve, N4RAF at black08ufo@gmail.com

POTA MAP – LOUDOUN COUNTY

- POTA site lists 1 Park in Loudoun
- POTA map only shows center point of a park / trail – some parks span multiple states and / or overlap with other parks
- So there are actually more
 - 4 additional POTA ‘parks’ found so far
 - 3 of them with multiple locations
 - About 30 ‘parking’ lots
- Mostly along Potomac region



**K-9936
Sweet
Run
State
Park**

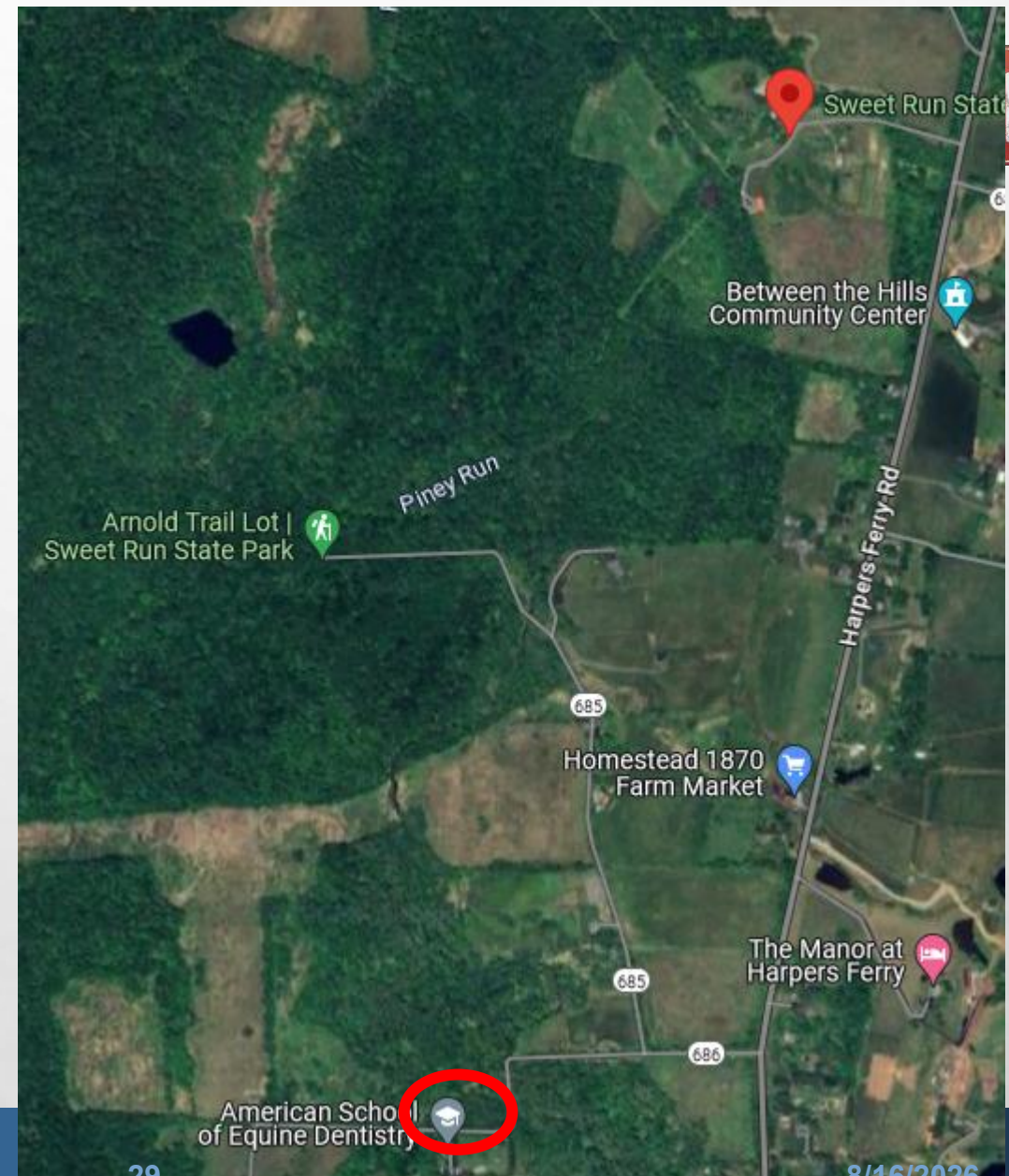
5 PARKS OF LOUDOUN



Park ID	Name	Loudoun Sites
US-9936	Sweet Run Park	
US-9935	VA Bird and Wildlife Trail (Foothills to Falls Loop)	Sweet Run Park Rust Nature Sanctuary Balls Bluff Battlefield Park Red Rock Wilderness Overlook Park Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve Claude Moore Park Algonkian Park Snickers Gap (Front Royal Loop)
US-4556	Appalachian Trail	Keys Gap Snickers Gap / Bears Den Loudoun Heights (Harpers Ferry Historical National Park)
US-4564	Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (NOVA Regional Commission (NVRC))	Leesburg (Balls Bluff Battlefield / Goose Creek – Rt 7 to Potomac – Lowes Island W&OD Trail
US-0735	Harpers Ferry Historical National Park	

US-9936 – SWEET RUN PARK

- New State Park as of late 2023
- Has been re-added to the VA Bird & Wildlife Trail
- 3 Sites
 - Main area – Ranger's station (top)
 - Arnold Trail Lot (center)
 - Horse Trail parking (red circle bottom)
- 11661 Harpers Ferry Rd, Hillsboro, VA 20132
- <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/sweet-run>

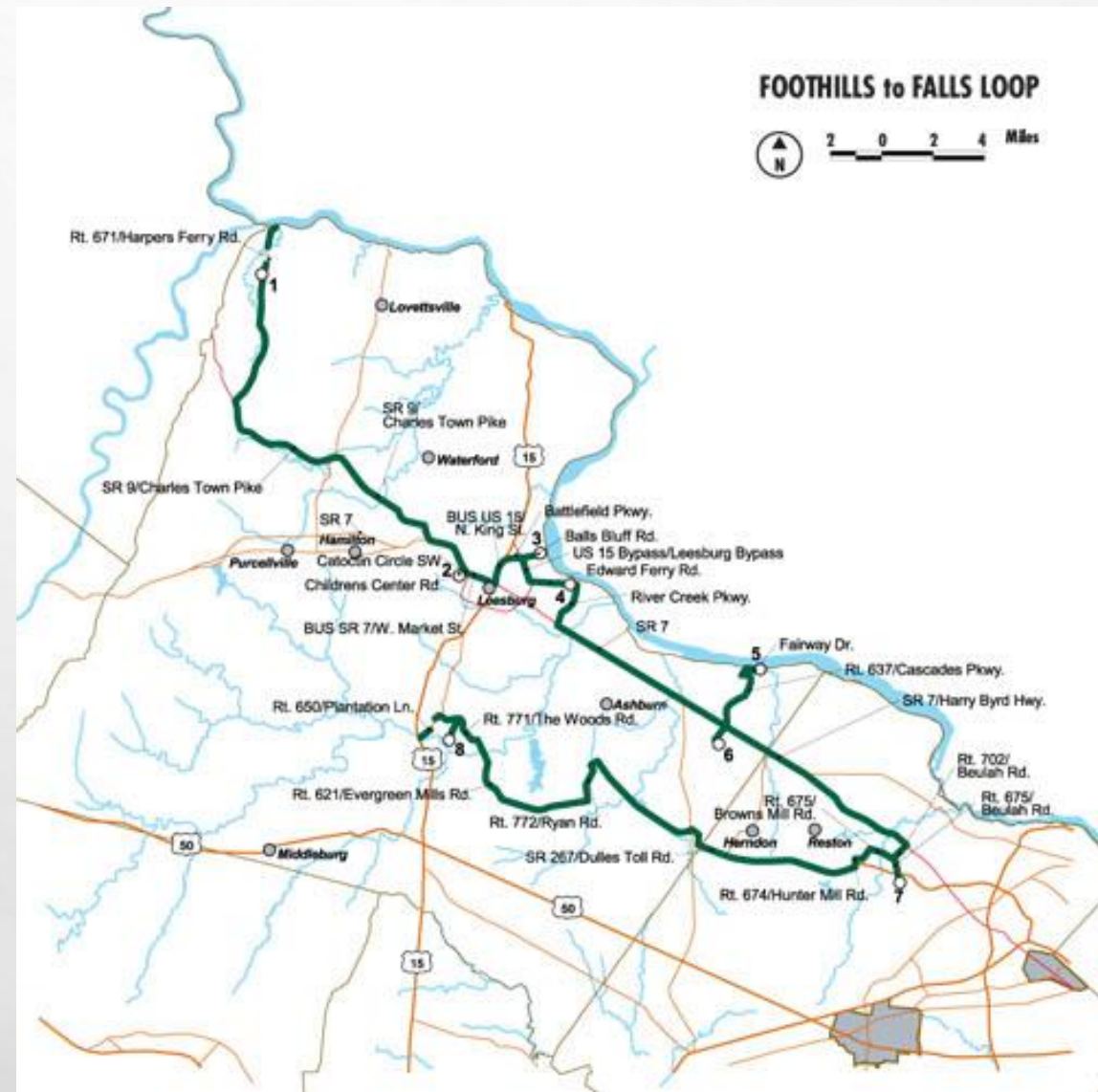




US-9935 VA BIRD & WILDLIFE TRAIL (VBWT)

- Foothills to Falls trail (6 sites) <https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/piedmont-trail/pff/>
 - PFF01A: Sweet Run State Park
 - PFF02: Audubon Naturalist Society Rust Sanctuary
 - PFF03: Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park
 - PFF04: Red Rock Wilderness Overlook Park
 - PFF05: Algonkian Regional Park
 - PFF06: Claude Moore Park
 - PFF07: Meadowlark Botanical Gardens (Fairfax near Wolf Trap)
 - PFF08: Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve
- Front Royal Trail (1 stop) <https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/mountain-trail/MFR/>
 - MFR04: Snickers Gap Hawk Watch

FOOTHILLS TO FALLS TRAIL



K-4564 – POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL (PHT)

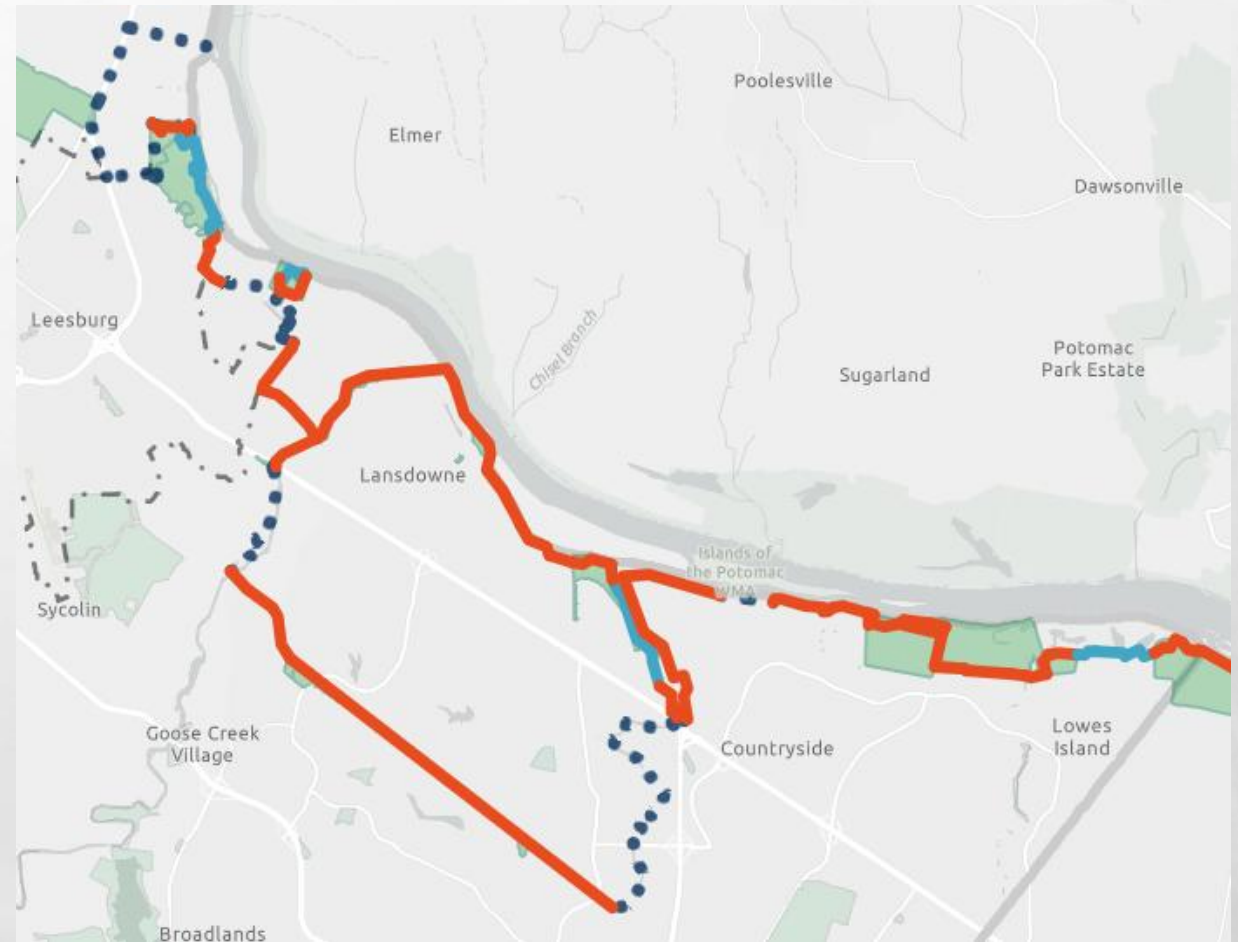


- White's Ferry / Balls Bluff to Fairfax along Potomac
- Branches in Goose Creek and Broad Run
- WO&D Trail from Goose Creek to Broad Run
- Next 2 charts show maps
- Goggle Earth [KMZ file](#)
 - Entire Trail
 - KMZ points don't all match actual trail

US-4564, PHT TRAIL MAP

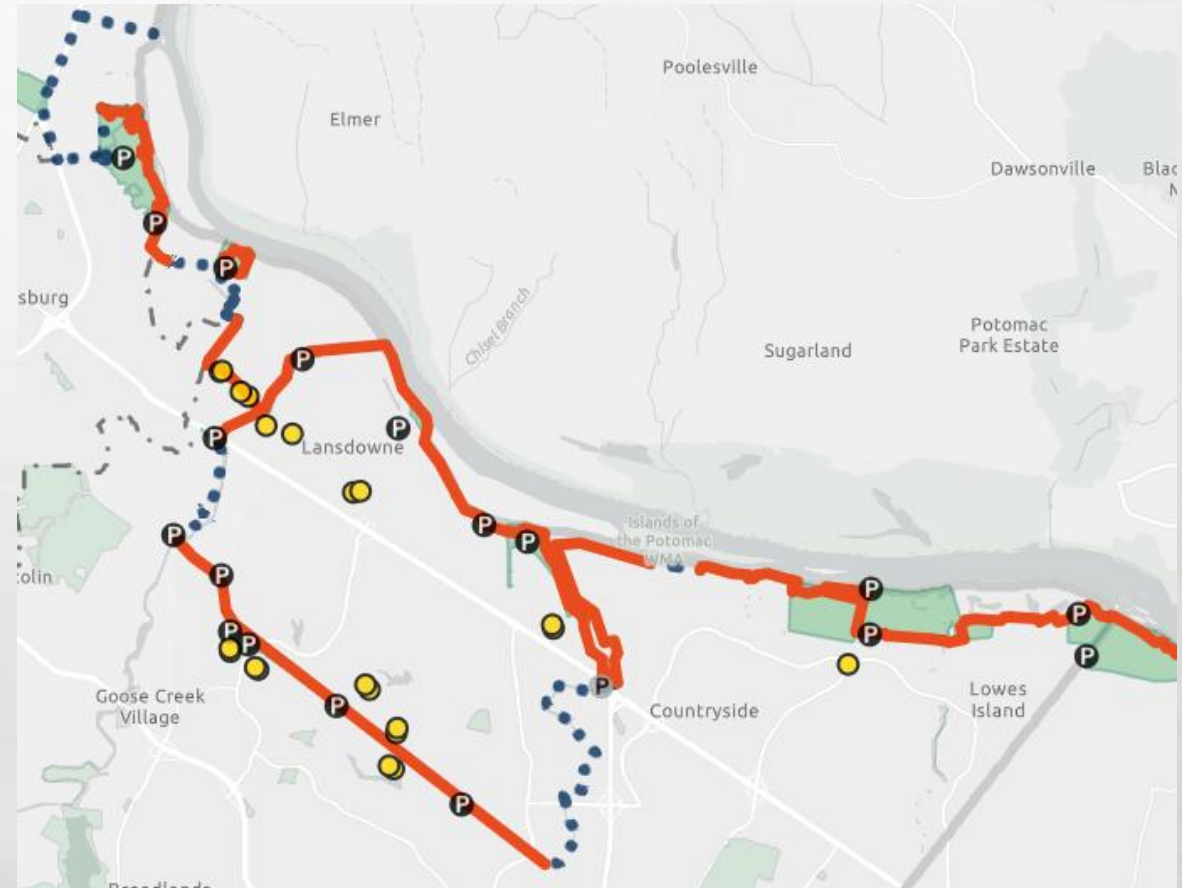


- Note trail location in Balls Bluff along river not as shown in KMZ files
- POTA rules states: Must be within 100 ft of Trail
- Blue dots – planned sections
- Eastern section appears to go through Trump National
 - Anybody want do one when he's playing?



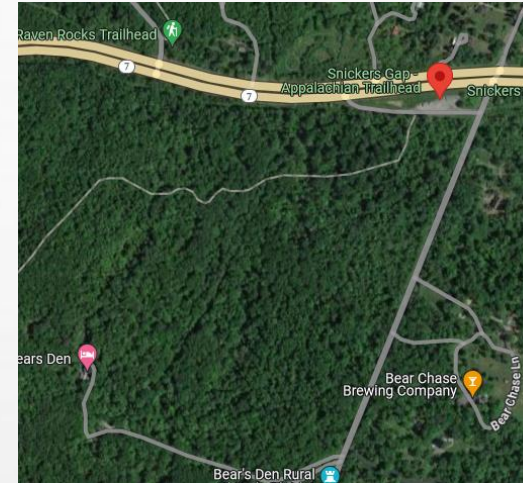
US-4564, PHT PARKING LOCATIONS

- P are parking
- Yellow dots – bus stops
- Blue dots – planned sections
- <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/c505ef05b6ba4a7d8a8b878aa2e8d6fb?item=6>



US-4556 APPALACHIAN TRAIL

- 4 locations
 - Snickers Gap – RT 7 and Blue Ridge (Mt Weather) Mountain Road
 - Commuter parking lot
 - Bears Den – Just south of Snickers Gap but parking lot more than 100ft distance
 - Keys Gap – RT 9 at WV border
 - Parking lot straddles state line so pick your state
 - Loudoun Heights (see Harpers Ferry – next chart)



US-0735 HARPERS FERRY HISTORICAL NATIONAL PARK

- Small section in Loudoun
- Can activate in WV, MD, VA
- Loudoun Heights – part of Appalachian Trail and may or may not be in Loudoun



'FERS – MULTIPLE PARKS



Loudoun Park Matrix					
Location	US-9936	US-9935	US-4556	US-4564	US-7735
	Sweet Run Park	VA Bird & Wildlife Trail	Appalachian Trail	Potomac Heritage Trail, National Scenic Trail	Harpers Ferry
Sweet Run Park	x	x			
Rust Park		x			
Balls Bluff		x		x1	
Red Rock Wilderness Overlook Park		x		x1	
Algonkian Regional Park		x		x1	
Claude Moore Park		x			
Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve		x			
Snickers Gap (Front Royal Loop) (Rt 7)		x	x1		
Keys Gap (Rt 9)			x1		
Harpers Ferry, VA			x1		x
Notes					
x1. Must be within 100ft of trails					
2. VA BWT - entire park counts					



CLOSE TO LOUDOUN

- **C&O Canal & Potomac Heritage Trail**
 - Point of Rocks Boat Ramp parking lot
- **Manassas, Monocacy, Antietam, Gettysburg Battlefields**
- **Gramble State Park, Gathland, South Mountain**
- **Sky Meadows**
- **Great Falls Park**
- **Wolf Trap**
- **DC – 32 parks**