

Ohio State Parks On The Air



Cooperation between the Portage County Amateur Radio Service (PCARS) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)

- *Is there a formal partnership between PCARS and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for the Ohio State Parks On The Air (OSPOTA) contest?*

PCARS has no formal partnership with ODNR for this contest, nor does a Memorandum of Understanding exist between PCARS and ODNR. However, PCARS has been in communication with ODNR in the past, concerning OSPOTA since early 2008 when the contest was started. We have worked with ODNR to ensure that as many Ohio State Park staff as possible are aware this Amateur Radio contest exists.

Radio amateurs have operated from Ohio State Parks for decades, and the vast majority of these operations were positive experiences from the perspective of both ODNR and the amateurs.

- *Can I use trees at an Ohio State Park to hold up wire antennas?*

This will vary from site to site. Some sites specifically prohibit tying any ropes to trees. We strongly suggest doing research before activating an Ohio State Park and bringing a portable mast for your antenna, in case using trees is prohibited. Always check with the Park Rangers first before setting anything up.

- *Do I need a special use permit to operate my Amateur Radio station in a Ohio State Park?*

This will vary from State Park to State Park. A lot will depend on your operating style. If you plan on operating strictly from your vehicle with a mobile antenna on the roof, or with a small station in a campground, you may not need a special use permit. If you are planning a large operation with big antennas, or want to operate from an Ohio State Park that may be deemed as “sensitive,” the odds you will need a special use permit increase dramatically. Do not expect to roll in to an Ohio State Park with a tower trailer and a kilowatt HF station without prior approval. If you have any doubts, ask the Park Rangers in advance.



Best Practices as an OSPOTA Participant

- ***Cooperate with ODNR staff at all times***

As an OSPOTA participant, it is absolutely critical that you communicate politely, honestly and openly and cooperate with all ODNR staff, rangers, and volunteers. We are *visitors* to the Ohio State Park, just like any other person or group, and we do not receive special consideration or priority because of our role as Amateur Radio operators. ODNR reserves the right to enforce their rules as they deem appropriate.

Despite PCARS' best effort, it is possible you will encounter an ODNR staff member who is not familiar with the OSPOTA contest. We have provided a one-page handout you can download on the OSPOTA web page or OSPOTA IO Group site to help explain to ODNR staff what OSPOTA is. Emphasize that this is a way the Amateur Radio community is helping ODNR to promote their Ohio State Park, and that amateurs worldwide are eagerly trying to make a radio contact with all Ohio State Parks.

Be friendly and engage with all Ohio State Park employees you encounter, not just the ones at the Ranger Station or visitor's office. Invite them to visit your site to show them what you are doing. Let one of the Rangers make a contact on your radio. This can go a long way in having the Rangers actually see and hear what you are doing.

- ***Do not disrupt the enjoyment of non-amateur visitors***

Part of this contest is to help showcase Amateur Radio to the general public. However, not everybody will be interested in what we are doing at Ohio State Parks. It is not in the best interest of Amateur Radio to disrupt other visitors to the Ohio State Parks. Please avoid setting up in high-traffic areas (unless this has been arranged in advance) and be mindful of your noise. Consider other visitors when setting up your station. But, you can also encourage park visitors to visit your station so they can see and hear what you are doing which will promote amateur radio in a good setting.

- ***"Leave nothing behind but footprints"***

This is an old saying among people who enjoy the outdoors. We are all stewards of Ohio State Parks. Do not build, erect, or install anything that damages the land or property of the unit or would have a negative impact on wildlife or visitors in that Ohio State Park. Pick up your trash. If you bring something in, take it out. Leave your operating site in the same condition you found it, or better.

- ***Sensitive Areas***

Some of the Ohio State Parks may have what they are deemed "sensitive areas". This means that extra caution should be used when trying to activate that Ohio State Park area. It may be for prior reservations by a wedding (or other) party, security reasons, such as the monuments, or for more aesthetic reasons - work with the administration of the Ohio State Park in question to achieve activation with minimal disruption. It may be as easy as moving to a lesser used area in the Ohio State Park.

- ***If Your Activation is Denied***

If you encounter an ODNR staff member who does not permit you to set up an Amateur Radio station, ask in a **friendly** way to speak with their supervisor. Be courteous and polite at all times. Ask if there are alternatives that would permit the activation to continue. It's possible the ultimate answer will be "no." Even then, be respectful. Let PCARS know (email: info@ospota.org) that you had difficulty, and we will see if something can be worked out for future operations. Just keep in mind: the more respectful an amateur is if denied activation, the easier our job will be to negotiate a positive outcome at a later date.

- ***Camping in the Camp Ground area or in the Wilderness***

If you will be operating from a camp ground or remote wilderness location in an Ohio State Park it is expected that you are experienced in camping or wilderness camping and accept the risks associated with this activity. There are real dangers, even for experienced outdoor enthusiasts. Be honest in your self-appraisal.

Be sure to check the website of the Ohio State Park you will activate prior to your trip; ODNR frequently posts alerts about park conditions, road closures, maintenance, etc.

Waiver of Liability

- ***Activators of Ohio State Parks acknowledge the following legal requirements:***

Participants in the OSPOTA contest do so at their own risk. All participants are on notice that some risk is involved with any portable Amateur Radio operation. Participants activating any Ohio State Park agree to take all safety precautions, including, but not limited to: avoiding power lines; following all rules and regulations of the Ohio State Park and instructions of Ohio State Park staff; choosing an operating site wisely; avoiding interactions with wildlife; not disturbing other guests of any Ohio State Parks; and by making an honest self-appraisal of their personal condition before undertaking portable Amateur Radio operation from an Ohio State Park.

PCARS and the ODNR assume no liability for any Amateur Radio operator or club participating in the Ohio State Parks On The Air contest and participants agree to assume all risk and liability for damage to personal property and injury to persons that may result from such operation, and to hold ODNR and PCARS harmless there from.

Make sure that you read the Rules, FAQ's and get your forms for the contest that are posted on the OSPOTA website: <https://www.ospota.org/> before the contest.



So get to an **Ohio State Park** and get **On The Air** in September.

Have some fun with this contest!

Learn more about PCARS at <https://www.portcars.org/>.

73 for now,
OSPOTA Contest Committee

January 2026