

Rancocas State Park US-1629 on March 30, 2024

Hello K2TD Members,

I can't believe that the entire month of March is almost over and I/we haven't gotten out to do a POTA. Let's change that. I am planning to activate Rancocas State Park which is now US-1629 (<https://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/rancocas.html>) This is my local park, and I've visited it many times over the past 20+ years. Oddly, I'm planning to visit a part of the park that I've never been to: Spencer Memorial Park at 339 Rancocas Blvd Mount Laurel, NJ 08054.

I will be arriving at about 9:30 with a goal to set up and begin the activation at about 10:00 EST Saturday March 30th. I will be activating the park (see maps below) under the Burlington County Radio Club call sign K2TD.

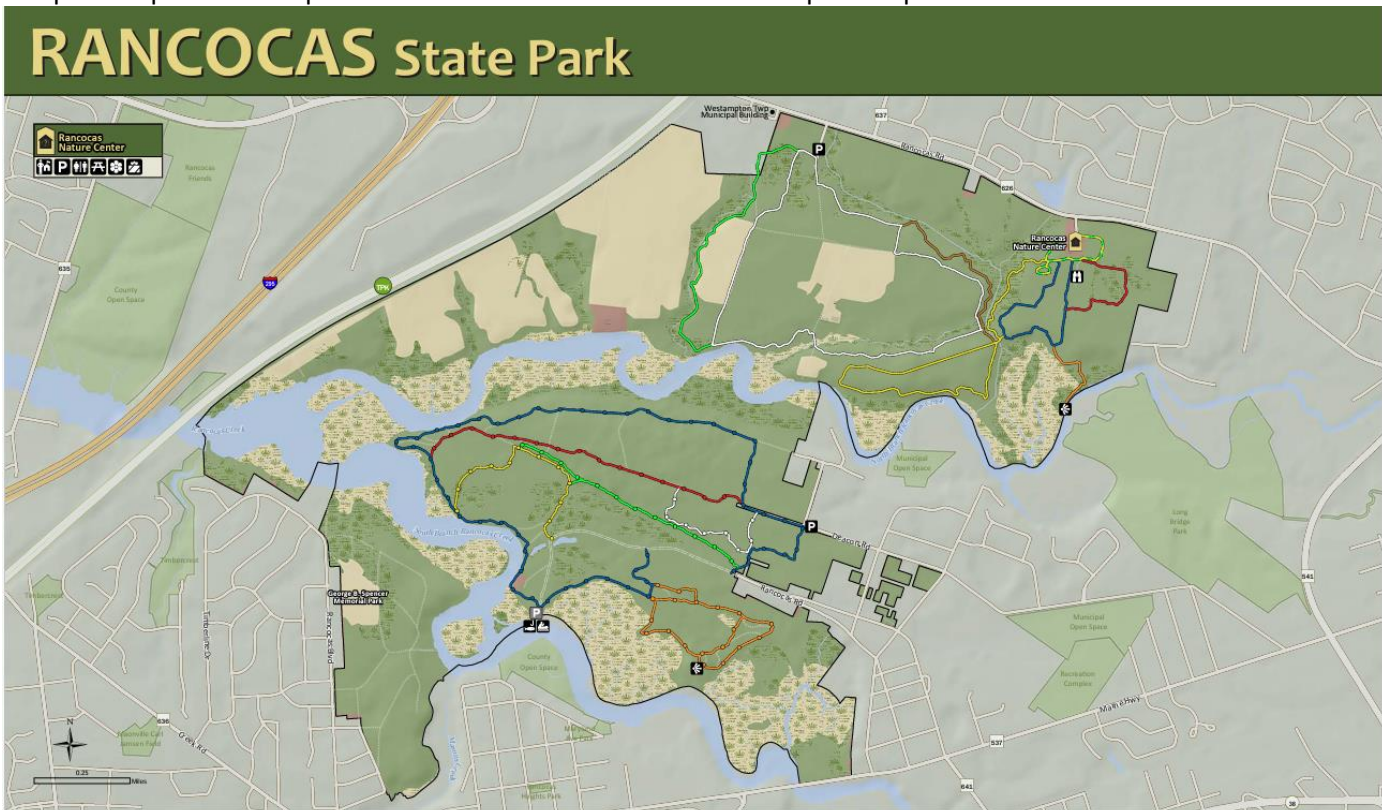
If you are available and plan to participate please RSVP to let me know.

I normally activate on 40m, but I'm going to try something new this time. My plan is to activate on 20m using my 17' whip, then try to activate 15M (I've never made a 15M contact), then activate on 10M (which everyone seems to love but I have never had good luck on this band.)

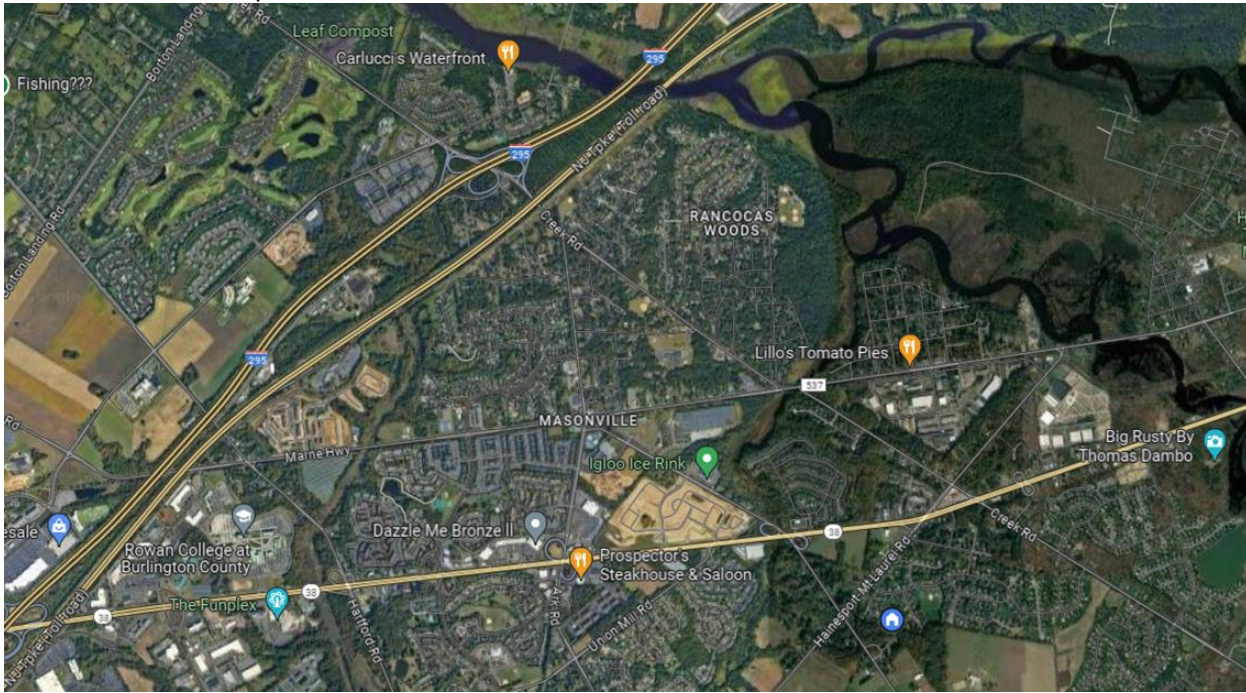
The day is really about getting out of the house more than anything (at least for me). So if you want to try POTA, test out something new/different, need some POTA help, or want to learn how I log contacts (or anything else) just let me know.

If you can't attend, please fire up your radio for the Spring season, and try to contact me at the park.

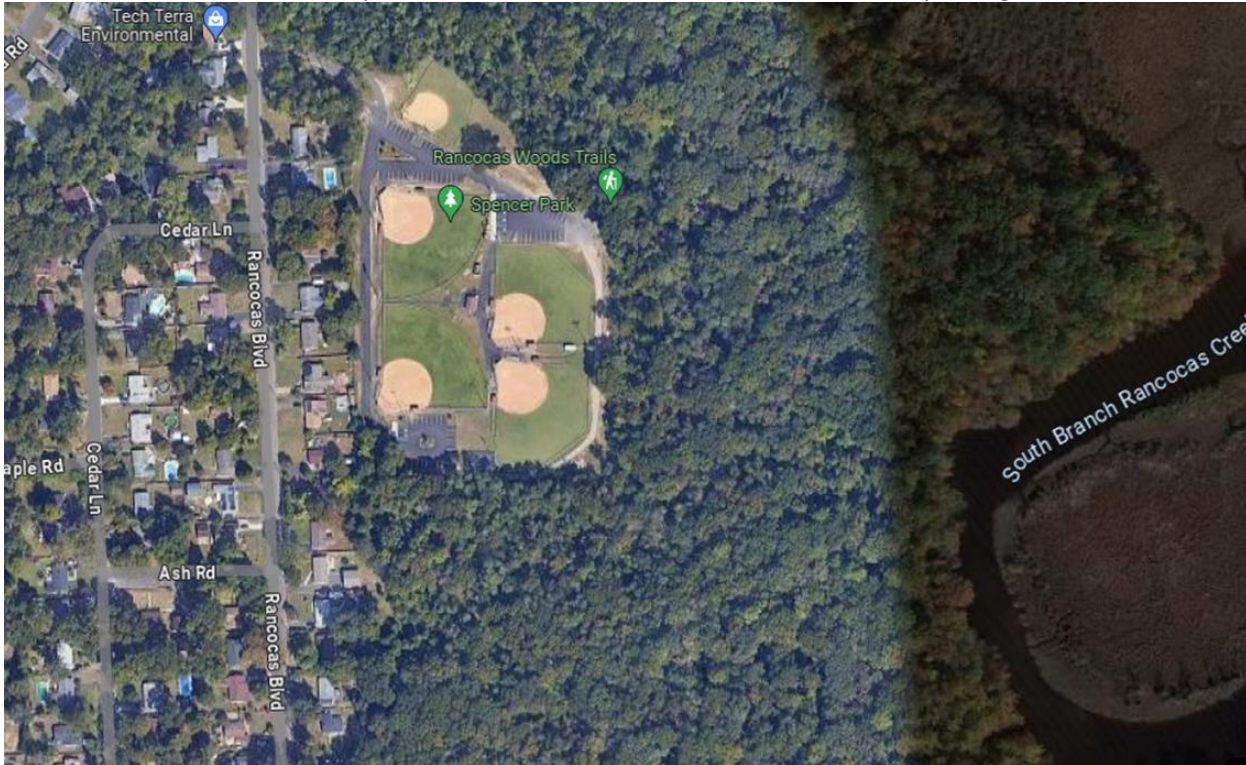
The park map is below: Spencer Park is near the bottom left of the park map.



Here is an overall map of the area. You can see the ball fields near “Rancocas Woods”



Here's a closer view of the map. I'll be somewhere visible near but not in the parking lot.



Bring a table, chair, tent/canopy and anything else you want to enjoy the day. The forecast looks great.

Hope to see you there!

I'm also planning to activate at Batsto in the next 2-3 weeks, but I haven't cleared the date yet. Stay tuned for more info.

Paul KD2ZYV

Rancocas State Park US-1629 on March 30, 2024

Summary:

Under a canvas of clear blue skies and the perfect backdrop of 60-degree weather, our Parks on the Air (POTA) adventure unfolded with a blend of anticipation and the unexpected.

I arrived as planned and started to set up near the back of the park.



I was met by Joe and Jack, and we began to set up.



As it turns out this part of the park had the potential to be really busy with kids playing ball. While there were a few games, we had a corner of the park pretty much to ourselves. Joe and I set up right near a trail head.



Joe was using his Buddi-Pole with his Icom Radio, Jack was set up in his car with a Hamstick on the roof, and I was using my Yaesu 857d and a homemade coil/whip antenna. As planned, I started to set up on 20M, Joe was trying 40M, and Jack was on 15M. At this point the day held a ton of promise.

As I mentioned I was experimenting with my homemade coil and whip. I was also trying the faraday cloth that I've seen on YouTube. Here are a few pics of my station at the park.



As with any expedition of worth, ours wasn't without its hiccups. My day began with a technical snag—antenna issues. My antenna wasn't behaving the same as it did at home. I did manage to get my SWR below 2 in the middle of the band so I started hunting POTA when I realized that the noise level was really high. I had S7+ across the entire band. At this time, I realized that Joe was having trouble tuning his antenna to 40M so knowing that my antenna was potentially not going to work at all, I went to help him. I figured that I could come back to my technical difficulties while the others activate the park. We fiddled with it for a good long while, but never really got 40M to tune on his radio.

Somewhere in this process I noticed that Bonnie had arrived and was sitting with Jack trying to make contacts on 15M. Jack's gear was working fine, but the bands were full top to bottom with DX contesters. Unfortunately, Jack was unable to make any contacts.

At this point Joe abandoned 40M and was trying 6M for a bit then he moved on to 17 where he was able to make enough contacts to activate the park.

I returned to troubleshooting my antenna. I'm fairly stubborn and wouldn't give up. In the midst of my technical tête-à-tête with my antenna, Dennis arrived. Fashionably late, but met with warm welcomes. His arrival reinvigorated me to get on the air and I continued to solve my antenna woes. It was a poignant reminder that in the world of amateur radio, camaraderie and collaboration are as crucial as any equipment. Well, I can't say how long we tried to make my antenna work, but we never did get it.

Around midday I decided to throw my reliable EFHW up into a tree. I got one end up about 60 feet and secured the other end to a tripod as a sloper. I tuned to the 20M band and started hunting POTA stations. There was still a very high noise level, but within 5 mins I had 5 contacts, and I ended with I think 13 contacts in short order.

Our primary goal, to activate the park, was a success, but I'm marking the day more as a gathering of friends than a demonstration of radio competence.

As we packed up, the satisfaction of a day well-spent mingled with questions about my antenna left us eager for our next outing.

As everyone pulled out, I decided to get some exercise in and walked the trails for about a mile and a half before returning to my truck and making the short drive home.

When I got home the troublesome antenna was taunting me so I set it up in the grass next to my driveway. I was shocked to find that I could quickly tune it on both 10M and 20M. (I didn't get a photo of the SWR at 20, but it was good.) So, I have to think about this and start looking at the antenna with a lot more scrutiny. I can't explain the trouble I had with it at the park. I suspect something is loose or maybe corroded so that it isn't behaving consistently. I'll figure it out sooner or later. (Or I'll throw it in the dumpster and build something new to play with. You never know! Lol!)



I think everyone had a good time; I know I did.

This trip was a testament to the spirit of POTA—a celebration of nature, friendship, and the airwaves.

73,
Paul KD2ZYV