Island Operations

Activating Peddocks Island in Boston Harbor

Chris Farnham, W1YTQ

PART meeting, October 20, 2026

Why islands?

Island operating is field operating with extra rules.

- A boat decides when you arrive and when you leave
- You carry everything you brought, and only that
- Water in every direction helps your signal
- A short trip feels like a small expedition

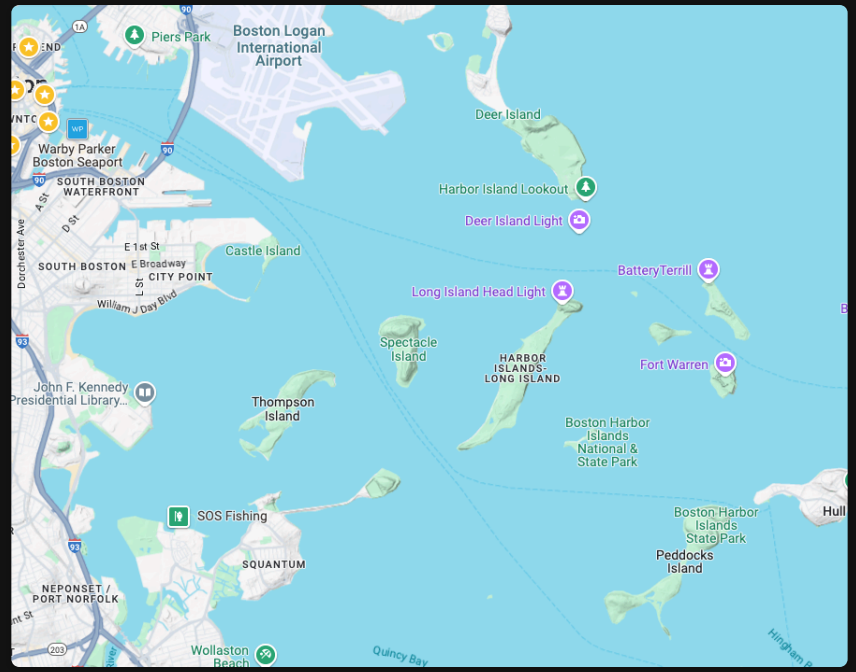
Tonight: one island, four years, and how you can do it too.

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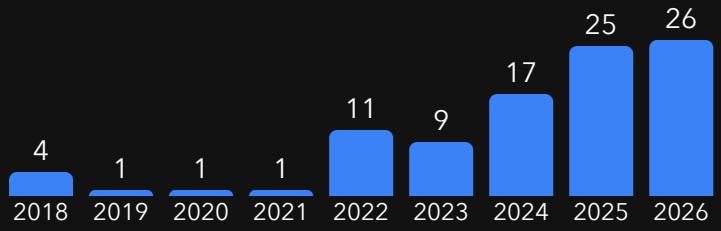


Boston Harbor Islands as a POTA site

- Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park
- **Peddocks Island is POTA US-2421**
- Hingham Bay, west of Hull
- **Top 5 activator** with just 6 activations: 2 each year I brought HF gear



Activations of US-2421 per year (95 total, 25 activators)



The whole park



- **34 islands and peninsulas** across 50 square miles of bays and harbors
- Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, managed by 11 partners
- Five of the 34 are peninsulas, like World's End. Tonight is about the islands
- Close to downtown Boston, reached only by boat

Getting to the island







- **Our trip:** Boston Fun Cruises, Charlestown to Peddocks, every September
- The skyline from the water, then through the remains of the Long Island Bridge
- Everything we own for the weekend rides along

Other ways to get there

Option	Where from
Passenger ferry (Boston Harbor City Cruises)	**Hingham Shipyard** (free parking, arrive 30 min early to load gear). Also Long Wharf, Quincy, Hull
Private charter (what we use)	Boston Fun Cruises, Charlestown
Paddle	Peddocks is within sit-on-top kayak range from Hull, Hingham and Quincy

- Ferries run seasonally and schedules change: check before you plan
- Last boat home sets your operating window

You can camp on Peddocks

- Reached only by ferry or private boat
- Tent sites and yurts, reserve up to 4 months ahead
- Fees: $8 per night for Massachusetts residents, $20 for non-residents, plus a $4 reservation fee
- Composting toilets, no showers, no supplies
- Fresh water on Peddocks only: one gallon per person per day
- No campfires on campsites



Boston Harbor Islands State Park, 30 Shipyard Drive, Hingham MA 02043
Information: 781-740-1605 x207

The campground



- Most tent sites and yurts sit in a loop in the southeast, with a few more yurts up the central road
- Restroom locations are marked on the map
- Trails and roads connect the campground to the rest of the island

Four years on Peddocks

Every trip was in September, with Troop 119.

2023

Hurricane remnants. No HF. Played with APRS on a handheld.

2024

First HF activation. Scouts get on the air. **Qualified for USI.**

2025

Local AM station swamped the G90. Sweden on the KH1 anyway.

2026

New FT-891. 45 contacts, 10 meters wide open to Brazil.





US Islands on the Air

US Islands Awards Program

https://usislands.org

- Chase or activate river, lake and ocean-shore islands in the 50 states and territories
- Awards for both activators and chasers
- "A great way to go on a mini-DXpedition without spending a lot of money"
- Massachusetts lists 63 islands, 43 of them qualified so far



How USI works

- **An island:** surrounded by water, at least 100 ft long and 50 ft from shore, and not a peninsula
- **Qualify** (first operation): 15 contacts under one team call, then report it to the Qualification Manager
- **Activate** (every later visit): no minimum, no reporting, just have fun
- **Frequencies:** 7.250, 14.250-14.260, 21.350 and 28.450 MHz. All end in 50, like the 50 states

We qualified Peddocks



- September 2024: two Scouts, K1MKD and KC1UHS, and I made contacts from the island
- The USI Awards Manager read our write-up and invited us to file an island qualification form
- Peddocks is now listed as **MA012S**, first qualified by W1YTQ with K1MKD and KC1UHS

The listing and the awards

usislands.org/massachusetts/

							Vineyard
~~Nomans Land~~	~~MA021~~		~~Nantucket Sound~~	~~Dukes~~	~~NA046~~		DELETED - READ MORE
Nonamesset	MA018		Vineyard Sound	Dukes	NA046	-Not yet qualified	
North Canal	MA063R		Merrimack River	Essex		KC1QKU	Pemberton Park, part of POTA K-2443 Lawrence Heritage State Park.
Osterville	MA030S		Barnstable Bay	Barnstable		N7PIB & K6KLL	Near the town of Hyannis in Barnstable Bay
Pasque	MA019		Vineyard Sound	Dukes	NA046	-Not yet qualified	
Pea	MA015		Bround Sound	Essex		-Not yet qualified	
Pearce	MA029R		Annisquam River	Essex		N1HRW/M	N.W. Of Gloucester - S.W. Of Rabson Point



First Q awards presented at Troop 119 Lexington's Court of Honor, March 13, 2025.

What I brought

Year	Radios	Antenna
2024	Xiegu G90, Elecraft KH1	Quarter-wave vertical
2025	G90, KH1	Rybakov vertical
2026	Yaesu FT-891, KH1	Quarter-wave vertical

- Paper log, notebook, key
- Headlamp, lantern for after dark
- Picnic tables are the shack

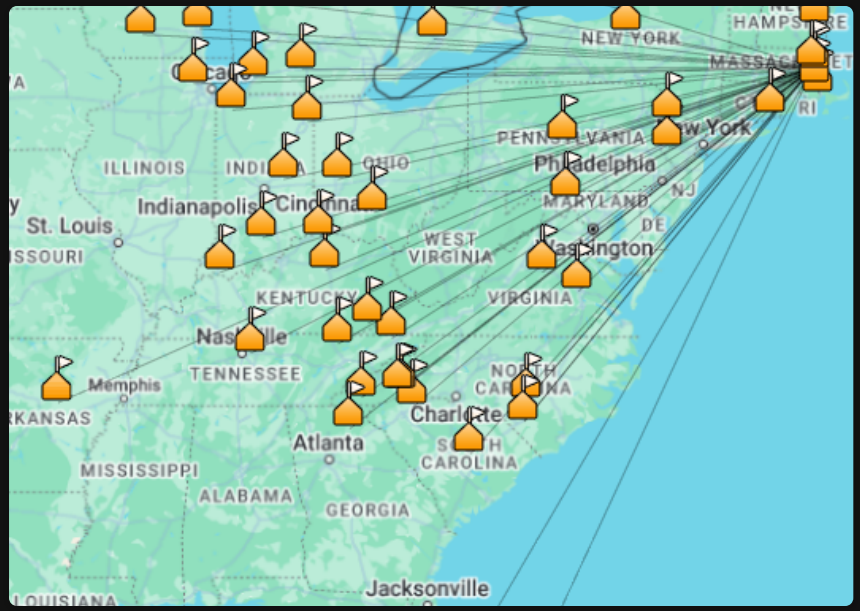


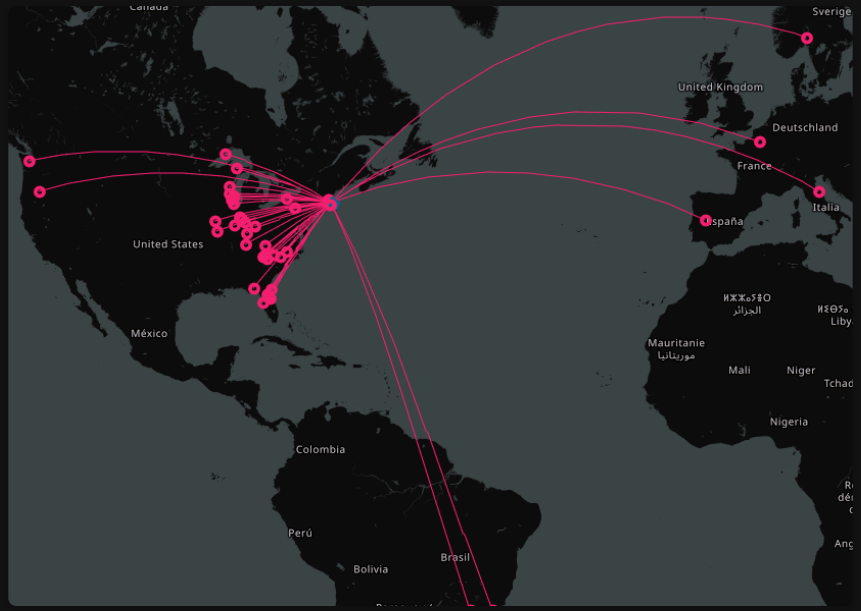
What I recommend

Be person-portable: it all fits in a backpack.

- You carry it on and off the boat, and from the dock to the table
- One radio plus a vertical on a short mast or tree
- A battery you trust, since there is no power at the table
- Bring a backup radio
- Tiny QRP radios do really well: salt water helps your signal
- Log on paper, take photos of the pages
- Expect wind, weather and sun: dress and pack for them
- Check your pack twice, because there is no trip back to the car

Results





2024 (left) and **2026** (right): US coast to coast, Europe, South America.

W1YTQ

This is why

Night CW on the beach, 40 meters, my KH1 and a vertical.

> "I can’t remember having a more enjoyable radio session. The moon, the waves and CW connecting me to operators hundreds of miles away were magic."



https://journal.seefar.dev/

Challenges and rewards

Challenges

- Boat schedules and a hard return time
- Carry in, carry out, no power
- Wind and weather: expect to be exposed to the elements
- Isolation: forget something and you can’t run to the car

Rewards

- A reference few people activate
- Few people around, and away from road traffic and noise
- Night CW on the beach in the moonlight
- DX over open water

Do it yourself

- Pick an island near you: usislands.org lists them by state
- Check pota.app for park islands (US-2421 for Peddocks)
- Go person-portable, check the boat schedule, plan the return
- Bring a Scout, or a friend, or both

Journal: journal.seefar.dev , W1YTQ

Questions?