

August 16, 2026

Hi Yoann,

Thank you for the care you are taking in reporting on the questions surrounding Parks on the Air® in France, particularly the eligibility of ZNIEFF references and the recent resignation of the French Mapping Representative. We appreciate the opportunity to provide some context from the Parks on the Air® Board's perspective.

At the outset, we think it is important to separate two issues that have become somewhat intertwined in the public discussion: the value of the work done by the French Parks on the Air community, which is substantial, and the separate question of whether every reference currently in the database meets Parks on the Air's established eligibility criteria.

The Board's review is focused on the latter. But it cannot be overstated that the Parks on the Air Board values the contributions of all our volunteers, activators, and hunters. At times, our desire to resolve issues through communication, education, and collaboration can also mean that difficult matters take longer to address than anyone would prefer.

Regarding your specific questions:

1. What is the Board's official position regarding French ZNIEFF areas?

The Board's current determination is that the ZNIEFF designation itself does not satisfy the requirements for inclusion in Parks on the Air.

That does not mean that every location associated with a ZNIEFF is necessarily ineligible. A site may qualify through another designation or managing authority that independently meets Parks on the Air criteria. The issue is whether the ZNIEFF designation itself constitutes a qualifying park entity under the program's rules.

This distinction is important because ZNIEFF is primarily an ecological inventory and identification system. The Board's concern is not whether these areas are environmentally important. Clearly, many are. The question is whether the designation creates the type of governmental park or protected-area status contemplated by the Parks on the Air rules.

The review process has already begun, but as you might imagine, reviewing thousands of references individually is tedious and time-consuming. Based on the work underway, the suggestion that the removal of ZNIEFF references will result in an 85% reduction in French Parks on the Air parks is not accurate.

2. How does Parks on the Air apply the "two levels of government" requirement in France?

Parks on the Air does not expect every country to mirror the governmental structure of the United States, nor do we believe American terminology should simply be imposed on another country's legal system.

The intent of the rule is to establish that a qualifying entity has a meaningful governmental basis and is not simply a locally identified area, private designation, database entry, or descriptive ecological boundary.

In evaluating French references, the Board is looking at the actual legal and administrative authority behind the designation, not simply whether multiple governmental bodies participate in collecting, reviewing, publishing, or administering information about it.

That distinction is central to the ZNIEFF discussion.

3. What happens to existing ZNIEFF-based references if they are considered ineligible?

References determined not to meet Parks on the Air criteria will be deactivated rather than continuing as active references.

4. What happens to existing activations and hunter QSOs?

This is understandably one of the greatest concerns among operators.

The Board is very aware that people have invested real time and effort activating and hunting these references, often in good faith and with no reason to believe there was an eligibility issue.

QSOs completed before a park is deactivated will remain credited to both the activators who made the contacts and the hunters who worked them. No new credit will be granted for contacts made after the reference has been deactivated.

We believe this respects the good-faith efforts of Parks on the Air participants who activated or hunted those references while they were valid within the Parks on the Air system.

5. Is grandfathering being considered?

The guiding principle is that we need to bring the database into alignment with Parks on the Air's qualification standards while also recognizing the legitimate interests of operators who used references that were available to them in the system.

Over the long term, the Board's position is not to grandfather parks that do not meet Parks on the Air eligibility criteria. The process of identifying references that do not meet those criteria is underway and ongoing. Wherever possible, those decisions are made with the assistance and local knowledge of Mapping Representatives.

The distinction is important: historical operating credit can be preserved without requiring an ineligible reference to remain active indefinitely.

6. Is this specific to France, or part of a broader review?

The underlying eligibility rules are global.

This is not about establishing one standard for France and another for the United States or any other country. If comparable references elsewhere do not satisfy the qualification criteria, they should be subject to the same scrutiny.

At the same time, different countries have different legal and administrative structures, so comparable designations cannot always be evaluated simply by name or category. The goal is a consistent standard, applied with an understanding of the governmental framework in each country.

There is also a broader issue of sustainability.

Parks on the Air has experienced extraordinary growth. That growth places significant demands on limited organizational resources, including volunteer time, database infrastructure, and the administration of an expanding awards program.

One of the questions we hear most often is, “Why can’t we add more parks?” The challenge is that there is an almost unlimited number of places around the world that could fall under an increasingly broad definition of a park or protected area. Without meaningful eligibility standards, the resulting growth could eventually become unsustainable.

For that reason, some limiting definition is necessary. The purpose is not to discourage participation, but to ensure that Parks on the Air remains manageable, consistent, and sustainable for everyone.

Communication and governance

Could communication surrounding this issue have been better? Certainly, and the Board continues to work on improving both internal and external communications. At the same time, better communication should not be confused with an absence of communication. The underlying disagreement over ZNIEFF eligibility had been communicated well before the Board's August action.

It is also worth noting that the current Board structure has existed for only about two years, rather than the three years referenced in some of the public discussion. The transition from a single point of decision-making to formal Board review and governance has itself been a significant undertaking.

Like virtually every aspect of Parks on the Air, the Board is entirely volunteer. During that period, it has been building governance from the ground up, including bylaws, meeting and decision-making standards, financial accounts, expenditure controls, and other organizational structures necessary for a rapidly growing worldwide program.

Volunteer organizations like Parks on the Air work best when conversations are respectful and grounded in shared expectations and a common understanding of the rules. When disagreements arise, we try to resolve them through discussion and collaboration. What may sometimes appear

from the outside as avoidance or delay can actually reflect an effort to find a solution everyone can live with.

Unfortunately, that is not always possible.

There is one point in the public discussion that we think is particularly important to clarify. Larry was not removed from his position as the French Mapping Representative. He resigned.

Nor was the question of ZNIEFF eligibility raised for the first time in August. Prior to the Board's most recent correspondence, Larry had been advised in writing by International Mapping Lead David Mato-Segovia on February 21, 2026, that ZNIEFF references did not meet Parks on the Air's eligibility criteria. Larry disagreed with that interpretation, and the disagreement ultimately reached an impasse.

The Board's August communication temporarily suspended park additions and edits in France and asked Larry to agree to the Board's interpretation of the eligibility standards before those privileges were restored. Our hope was that he would remain involved and work with us in reviewing the French database. The letter specifically invited him to participate in that process. Larry subsequently chose to resign.

We mention this not to personalize the disagreement or to criticize Larry. Reasonable people can disagree about how these rules should be interpreted. But we do think it is important that the sequence of events be accurately understood.

Ultimately, responsibility for interpreting and applying Parks on the Air's rules rests with the Board. That is not unique to this disagreement; it is a fundamental part of the Board's governance responsibility for the program.

The French Parks on the Air community

One point we would especially like to emphasize is that this is not a judgment on the French Parks on the Air community or on the extraordinary enthusiasm that has developed there.

The growth of Parks on the Air in France has been remarkable. Larry and others have clearly devoted enormous amounts of time to building that community, adding references, assisting operators, and promoting portable amateur radio.

The difficult issue for the Board is that enthusiasm and volunteer effort cannot, by themselves, determine whether a reference qualifies. The organization ultimately has an obligation to ensure that its database is consistent with the rules of the program.

We also think it would be inaccurate to characterize this as a dispute between the United States and France. The Board's responsibility is to administer a worldwide program consistently. That sometimes requires revisiting decisions or practices that developed over time, particularly as Parks on the Air has grown as rapidly as it has.

We would encourage the French community not to interpret a review of park eligibility as a rejection of France, French operators, or the tremendous contribution they have made to Parks on the Air.

The Board wants French operators activating parks. We want French hunters participating. We want Parks on the Air France to continue to grow.

The challenge is making sure that growth occurs within a framework that can be applied fairly and sustainably around the world.

You are welcome to quote this response in your reporting, provided the answers are presented in their full context.

Thank you again for approaching this thoughtfully and giving us the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

73,

Board of Directors

Parks on the Air