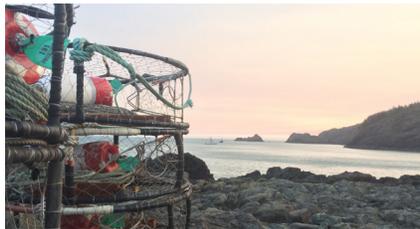




## HB 2603: Protect Oregon's Seafloor and Beaches submarine cable planning & legislative action

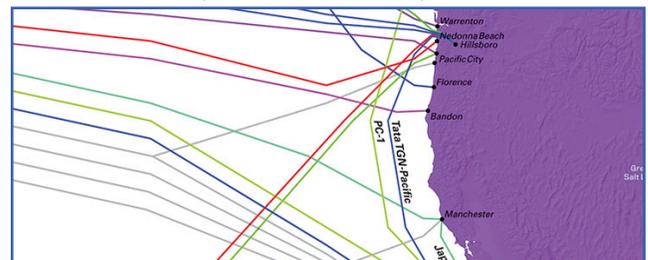


### The Oregon Coast Economy

Oregon's ocean and beaches are world-renowned. Not only do they draw tourists and retirees, but they are also an economic powerhouse – fishing, tourism and recreation provide precious jobs and a way of life for our rural, coastal communities and our ocean and public beaches are an essential part of our state's identity and economy.

### Submarine Cables and the Oregon Coast

But many may not know that Oregon is also a number one landing location on the west coast for submarine cables, which are responsible for supporting communications data from telephone to internet and private data. While these cable landings can generally be performed safely, recent accidents including the abandonment of



equipment and materials on and below Oregon's seafloor and beaches near Pacific City has highlighted gaps in Oregon's siting and decommissioning standards, and conflicts with longterm planning.

Accidents such as this summer’s described below, recent complications with removal of other submarine cables, the growing demand for seafloor uses and potential conflicts with ocean and coastal resources and users all critical to Oregon’s economy, spotlights the need for legislative action and policy improvements.



## Accidents Happen

On April 28, 2020, Edge Cable Holdings, Inc, a subsidiary of Facebook, was performing horizontal drilling beneath the seafloor when a drill pipe broke. The following **materials were abandoned**, and are **still under the seabed**, and some portion (the end of the drill pipe and some of the drilling fluid) is beneath **the beach**:

- 1,000 feet of drill pipe,
- 6,500-6,700 gallons of drilling fluid
- Carbide drill tip,
- Gyro module
- Steering tool

According to the Department of State Lands (DSL), the agency responsible for permitting the project on the ocean floor, “Edge Cable **did not notify DSL of the abandoned equipment until June 17th**”, almost **2 months after the accident had occurred on April 28th**. According to the agency, “**The delay in notification eliminated any potential options for recovery of the equipment**”.

## A solution through legislative action

HB 2603 has been introduced to protect Oregon’s businesses and residents that depend on our ocean and coastal resources from abandonment and user conflicts while continuing to provide for submarine cable development opportunities.

**Specifically, this legislative action is intended to:**

- 1) Require undersea cable owners/operators to provide financial assurance for removal of cables, drilling equipment and associated accidents.
- 2) Establish stronger siting standards, fines for failure to report and remove equipment from accidents and/or failure to adequately reclaim land or waters following an accident.
- 3) Requires state DSL & DLCD to study unified and streamlined permitting processes.

## Planning for The Growing Demand

From telecommunications to ocean renewable energy, there continues to be an increasing interest in Oregon’s seafloor and bringing these important technologies ashore is an important part of their development. With constraints on ocean spaces, so do we narrow down the potential for these projects to land ashore without conflict. This potential for conflict, recent accidents and the growing demand on the resource is a call for comprehensive planning. Such planning, and ultimately permitting, should be done in a more unified fashion – coordinating with “end of the line” permitting as to not separate shore-side agencies, local governments and coastal users but also provide some assurances and a streamlined process for the industry.

**For more information, please contact:**

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