

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

April 13, 2023

Agenda Item: 6d

Information

Topic: Bifrost Fiber Optic Cable Crossing at Winema Beach

Presented by: Kevin Herkamp

On March 9, 2023, the Ocean Shores team received a complete application from AMCS LLC, an affiliate of Amazon Web Services, to install the Bifrost Submarine Fiber Optic Cable across the Ocean Shore State Recreation Area at Winema Beach. The Bifrost cable is an ultra-high-speed fiber optic telecommunication cable system that will provide a large capacity direct link between the continental U.S. (Oregon) and Asia (Singapore), crossing the Pacific Ocean via Guam.

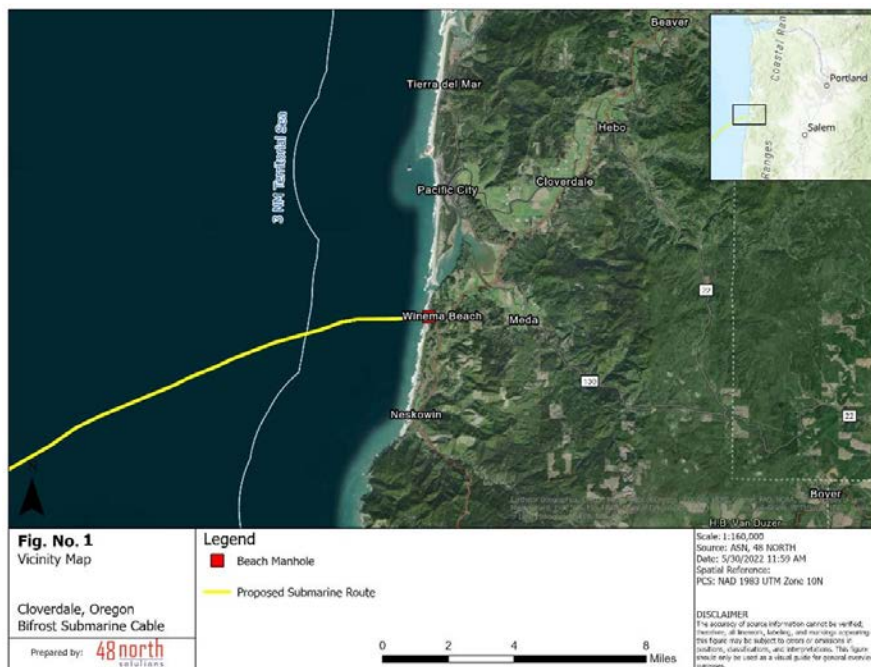


Figure 1: Map of project location

Winema Beach is located approximately four miles south of Pacific City. Upland development around the landing site includes the Wi-Ne-Ma Christian Camp and a rural residential area. The beach at this location is publicly owned. The Oregon Coast Trail is located just south of the proposed project site and access to/from the beach is via public access point #38 at the end of Winema Road.

On the way to Oregon, the cable would be trenched in the seafloor where possible, from about two-thirds of a mile offshore to the landing at the Wi-Ne-Ma Christian Camp, the cable be installed via horizontal directional drilling at a depth of between 20 and 80 feet below the ocean

shore. Upon landing in Winema, the cable would be fed through a new beach manhole and connected to terrestrial fiber optic cable en route to Hillsboro.

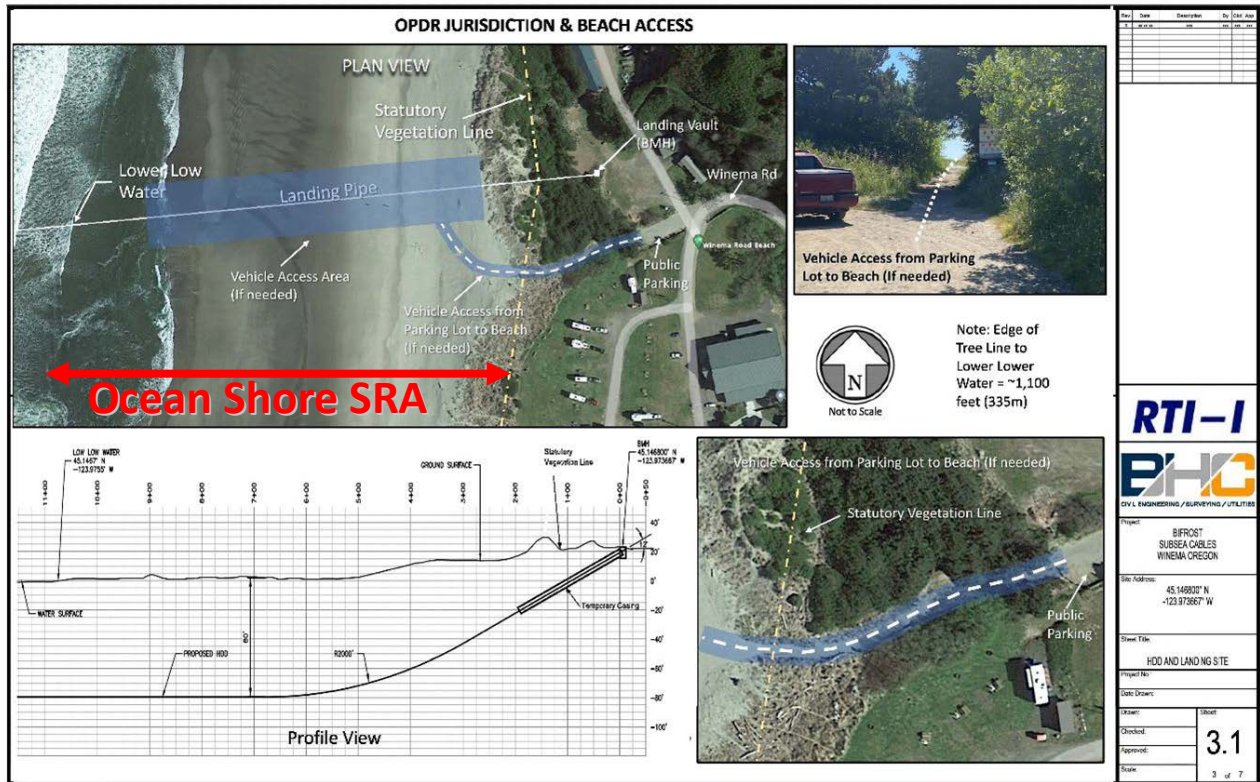


Figure 2: Project information

Previous cable landings have resulted in unexpected situations and less than desirable outcomes. These have included situations like inadvertent releases of drilling fluids onto the ocean shore and into sensitive upland resource areas, the association to sink holes, and inadequate coordination with agency staff during unexpected situations like these or drill breakage. Recognizing this potential and desiring not to repeat them, the applicant and the agent have been proactively working with multiple parties and agencies to address these situations. This has included one-on-one meetings and public meetings to identify outstanding concerns and issues. OPRD has been working with the applicant and their agent for nearly a year to identify ways to minimize impacts to the ocean shore.

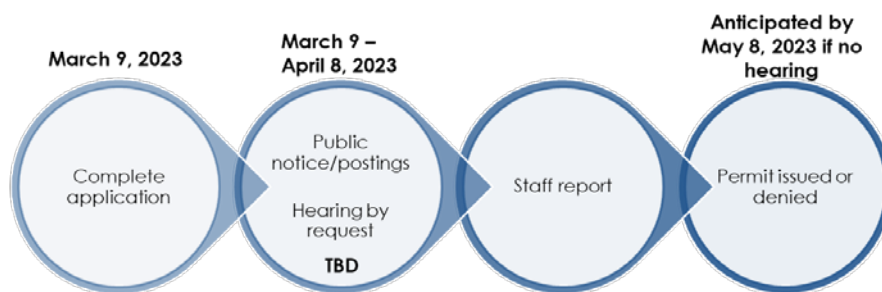


Figure 3: Drill bit, drilling fluid release, and sinkhole from previous projects.

The proposed actions on the ocean shore consists of the cable crossing via horizontal directional drilling, temporary installation of a drilling guide wire, and response to unintended events. The cable crossing is planned to occur well below the surface and all construction is outside of the ocean shore. The greatest risk to the ocean shore and recreational use from the drilling activities is the development of sink holes and the inadvertent release of drilling fluid. OPRD staff worked with the applicant and agent to develop specific response plans that outline the problems, what actions need to be taken, who is responsible for the action, and the roles of the applicant and agencies. These plans also included many measures to minimize the potential for these situations to occur in the first place. The guide wire is a small cable temporarily placed within a foot of the beach surface and will be placed in a manner as to not impair public use. Machinery will only operate on the beach, and utilize the Winema beach access point during response to an unintended event. Measures to minimize impacts and restore the beach following an event are outlined in each of the response plans.

On March 9, 2023 OPRD started the public comment period for the application and on March 14, 2023 OPRD jointly participated in a public meeting hosted by the Department of State Lands (DSL) where no public testimony was given. DSL is reviewing the same project as part of an application easement through the territorial sea and removal-fill activities. DSL provides information on the “Undersea Cables in Oregon” webpage (<https://www.oregon.gov/dsl/WW/Pages/underseacables.aspx>).

The OPRD public review period closes on April 8, 2023. Following the public notice, staff will develop a staff report based on the criteria in the ocean shore rules, including considerations for impacts to public safety and the scenic, recreation, and natural and cultural resource values. Unless OPRD receives 10 requests for a hearing by the close of the public comment period, staff expect to make a permit decision no later than May 8, 2023.



Prior Action by the Commission: None related to this application. Information items have been provided for similar projects between 2018 and 2023.

Action Requested: None
Prepared by: Kevin Herkamp