

Board of Land and Natural Resources,
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Submitted via email to blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov for BLNR meeting on [November 14, 2025](#).

November 9, 2025

Subject: Written Testimony on Agenda Item K-1: SEA-US Cable Landing at Mākaha Beach Park, O‘ahu

Dear Chair and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

Aloha mai kākou.

My name is Hannah Phelps, I am a master’s student at the University of Hawai‘i Mānoa earning my Master’s in Environmental Management in the department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management. Prior to starting this program, I worked in coastal resource management, endangered species monitoring, and environmental consulting. My professional expertise is fueled by my genuine concern and sincere passion for the preservation of wildlife, sensitive habitats, and the priceless resources our planet provides us with. I am writing as an individual and identify myself as a non-indigenous resident of O‘ahu.

As a prior consultant for Soar Environmental, I conducted Biological Resource Assessments/Evaluations (BRAs and BREs) for proposed project sites. This included site visits as well as mapping sensitive species and assessing potential impacts of the project. Many of these projects were for the installation of broadband communications fiber optic cables, similar to the nature of this project. Based on my experience with these projects, **I support the SEA-US Cable Landing at Mākaha Beach Park for its important contributions to Hawai‘i’s telecommunications infrastructure.** We live in an age where access to reliable connectivity is an important part of everyday life. This project could provide meaningful benefits to local schools, government operations, and private users – increased broadband redundancy may support the state’s resilience in times of emergency communication or natural disaster response.

However, to align with Hawai‘i’s goals for coastal resilience and nearshore ecosystem protection, and given previous issues with improper cable laying such as the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary,¹ I respectfully urge the Board to include the following conditions and considerations in its approval:

¹ NOAA, [Submarine Cables - Domestic Regulation](#)

- **Biological Monitoring:** Although there is mention of biological monitoring in the project proposal, I recommend more detailed requirements for monitoring including active divers monitoring cable laying to quickly attend to frac-outs if they occur, ensure no species are impacted by cable laying, and inspect the course of the laid cable to ensure it is in correct place. Incorrect cable placement has been a main problem with previous submarine fiber optic cables as seen at Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.
- **Cultural Monitoring:** The proposal acknowledges the possibility of encountering iwi kūpuna. While it specifies that a biological monitor will be present during installation, it is equally important that a qualified cultural monitor be on site throughout ground-disturbing activities to ensure immediate action if any remains or artifacts are discovered. Given the documented history of iwi kūpuna in the area, this safeguard is essential to honoring and protecting Native Hawaiian cultural heritage.

Aside from these few details, I commend the project team for selecting primarily uncolonized sandy bottom as the cable route that avoids sensitive reef habitat, and an outlined plan for slowed drilling as the cable nears the “daylighting zone” to reduce sedimentation. Furthermore, I commend the use of post-installation inspection and monitoring to check for exposed segments of cable.

To reiterate, given the painful legacy of cultural erasure and land dispossession in this state, **I urge the board to ensure that local cultural monitors are involved in addition to biological monitors.** Their presence would advocate for the preservation of burial sites, upholding cultural respect and accountability for Native Hawaiians whose ancestry and identities are tied to this ‘āina.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this project. I appreciate your careful consideration in the implementation of this project.

Sincerely,
Hannah Phelps
Master’s Student, Environmental Management
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