



North American Submarine Cable Association (NASCA) Cable Burial Experience on the Northeast Coast of the United States

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The purpose of this NASCA cable burial experience statement is to share the cable burial experiences of the submarine telecom cable industry with other offshore stakeholders who may find it necessary to protect their subsea assets from fishing and marine resource harvesting operations.

Submarine telecommunications cables have landed at sites along the Northeast Coast of the United States for decades. During the 1980's and 1990's, submarine telecom cables located in the Northeast United States seaboard suffered several cases of damage from hydraulic clam dredges. During that period the typical target burial depth for telecom cables in this region was two to three feet (0.6 to 0.9 meters)

Hydraulic clam/quahog dredges penetrate the seabed more than other mobile fishing and harvesting gear such as scallop dredges and otter trawls. Numerous studies have examined seabed penetration of these gear types (Stevenson et al¹).

¹ Stevenson D, Chiarella L, Stephan D, Reid R, Wilhelm K, McCarthy J, Pentony M. **Characterization of the fishing practices and marine benthic ecosystems of the northeast US shelf, and an evaluation of the potential effects of fishing on essential habitat.** NOAA Tech Memo NMFS NE 181; 179 p.

In response to this external threat, since the year 2000, submarine cable systems have been buried to a typical target depth of 5 to 6 feet (1.5 to 2 meters) where seabed conditions permit. Shallower burial in hard, dense sea beds has been sufficient to protect the cable. Since this change, the subsea telecom cable regional damage rates resulting from fishing and hydraulic clam dredging operations have been reduced to near zero.