Submarine Cables & the Environment:
Submarine Cables & regulation of the marine environment in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction - is there a problem?
1155-1230
So! Is there a Problem? Why this Topic?
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- The submarine cable industry works in the marine environment and is a responsible steward; however:
- There are moves to greatly increase the geographic footprint of Marine Protected Areas both within and outside areas of national jurisdiction, also:
- A number of states and environmental NGOs are seeking to regulate marine activities in the high seas under the auspices of protecting biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), through:
  - A new internationally-binding legal instrument, as an implementation agreement under the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention
  - Draft treaty to be considered by the UN GA acknowledges that the laying and maintenance of submarine cables have benign environmental effects and are governed by provisions of UNCLOS, implying but not stating, that submarine cables should be exempt from additional regulation
- If submarine cables not exempt, potential for new regulation to seriously hinder the development and implementation lead time for new submarine cable systems traversing the world’s oceans
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A significant catalogue of peer reviewed research clearly shown the neutral to benign environmental effects of submarine cables.

The inert nature and small physical footprint of cables on the seabed is clearly shown in these photographs, which are mainly from the continental margin within EEZs.