

COASTAL TREATY TRIBES STATEMENT ON
SABLEFISH HARVEST SPECIFICATION FOR 2013-2014

The four Coastal Treaty Tribes—Hoh, Makah, and Quileute Tribes and the Quinault Indian Nation—do not support the preliminary preferred alternative ABC for sablefish that is based on a P^* of 0.33. The best available science from the last assessment shows that the population decline has been caused primarily by below-average recruitment over the last ten years. The population is predicted to level out under the status quo harvest policy (P^* of 0.45 with a 40-10 adjustment) or even increase if estimated high 2008 and 2010 recruitment events are realized. Lowering the P^* , in addition to the decrease from the population decline, represents an undue burden on fishermen. It compounds the negative impact of lowered available harvest on our tribal communities and will have a disproportionate impact on tribes that are already economically depressed and highly dependent on sablefish fishing. There will be negligible benefit to the stock from this proposed reduction in harvest since abundance is largely dictated by recruitment success.

It is also a departure from the spirit of maintaining the 2011-2012 specifications and management measures for this next management cycle. There needs to be a more robust discussion among co-managers of the use of P^* in precautionary fisheries management prior to setting a lower level (i.e., when should it be lowered and by how much?). It is premature to alter the harvest policy on such an important stock without full consideration of the impacts of possible alternatives. For 2013-2014 the ABC should be based on a P^* of 0.45 just as it was last cycle (i.e. 6,330 and 6,843 respectively).