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Editor, Journal of Sustainable Forestry

Dear Dr. Goodale,

You served as the editor for our article published in 2018 in *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10549811.2017.138611>) and presently we would like you to consider Pinus rigida (Pinaceae) Response to Fire Absence and Topographic Factors at Mt Desert Island. Since 2014 we have studied pitch pine, fire and other disturbances and the fate of imperiled (S2) pitch pine refugia on a somewhat remote island in Maine. Most authorities conclude fire is a requisite for pitch pine persistence in Maine and other States. Yet, at Mt Desert Island, fire is absent for many years.. Given a lack of fire history, and a recent trend in warmer and wetter summers and winters, evergreen competitors are likely to gain the upper hand over pitch pine. We seek to examine factors beside fire which shape persistence, such as topography, for which we obtained a variety of metrics related to or independent of fire history. Tree subjects were divided evenly into low and high elevation categories and according to fire exposures in 1920 and 1947. Single-point-in-time leaf and soil data were captured during a high stress time (end of July) over two years; data are reported in eight figures and seven tables. We found aspect and slope orientation accounted for differences in adaptivity (growth, expansion into greater stand density) with little evidence to suggest recent fire history (since 1947) was as consequential as topography with regard to numerous biological outcomes. Results of intrinsic water use efficiency (δ13C) pointed to a selective preference for either growth at low elevations or stress tolerance at high elevations coupled. Soil water retention coupled with persistent colonization at low elevations is, for the present at least, moderating increasing pressure from uneven moisture patterns and winter warming. We intend for our research to serve the needs of those engaged in pitch pine conservation in the eastern U.S.  
  
Jeff Licht, for Nick Smith and Risa Mcnellis