PROMOTING MIXED STANDS THROUGH CONVERSION TREATMENTS. EFFECT OF HOLM OAK COPPICES THINNING ON BLACK PINE REGENERATION

Alfredo BRAVO-FERNÁNDEZ 1, Sven MUTKE 2,3, Rafael SERRADA 1,2 and Sonia ROIG 1,2

1 ECOGRESFOR, Research Group on Ecology and Sustainable Forest Management, Technical University of Madrid (Spain), 2 Centre of Forest Research-INIA (Spain), 3 Sustainable Forest Management Research Institute. UVA-INIA (Spain)

OLD COPPICES FOR FIREWOOD PRODUCTION IN MEDITERRANEAN QUERCUS STANDS: How to manage them for today’s needs and threats?

In Spain and at the Mediterranean basin, Quercus woodlands formerly dedicated to firewood production currently occupy wide areas. These Quercus coppices present both serious silvicultural and economic problems, due to the abandonment of the traditional and intensive management techniques and harvesting (clear-cuttings in short rotations). Current woodlands are over-aged monospecific stands, with excessive density, with diameter and height growth stagnation and a great risk of wildfires with scarce production of forest goods or services.

Proved good alternative for old coppices in Mediterranean regions:

Conversion treatment to high forest over stump

The conversion treatment of old Quercus coppices consists of thinning treatments with variable intensity and rotation, in addition to pruning and brush out operations. In holm oak stands, basal area reduction of 50% results in improvement of growth rates and forest structure changes but it doesn’t causes an excessive stump resprout.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

→ Experimental trial for the analysis of conversion treatments depending on ecological factors and silvicultural parameters in Central Spain (Guadalajara province).
→ The experimental design (three locations; only one is showed here) includes different thinning intensities (from 0 to 100% of extracted basal area).
→ Unit: plots of 10 m x 10 m (60 plots/location).
→ Climate: continental Mediterranean. Shallow terra rossa soil over limestone.
→ Original vegetation: homogeneous dense coppices of Quercus ilex with isolated overtopping Pinus nigra trees, probable relics of the original mixed stand composition.
→ Complete dendrometric Inventories have been carried out in 1994 and 2010.
→ First thinning treatments were done in 1995; second thinning in 2011.
→ Regeneration of black pine: transect per plot in diagonal of 14.14 m x 1 m.

Quantification of pine regeneration in four categories:

- (1) h<30 cm; (2) 30 cm < h < 130 cm; (3) h >130 cm and d< 5 cm; (4) h >130 cm and 5 cm < d < 10 cm.

RESULTS

✓ Fifteen years after thinning an abundant pine regeneration was installed in the woodlands; regeneration abundance is related with basal area reduction.
✓ Distance to mature trees or relationship with other stand density or competition indexes would be considered in following analysis.
✓ The fast installation of Pinus regeneration suggests the potential of the zone for the restoration of multipurpose mixed Quercus-Pinus stands in wide areas, where Quercus species were favoured by human populations for firewood and charcoal production.

CONCLUSIONS

Conversion treatment of coppices, with the creation of mixed stands, constitutes a good management alternative for extensive areas and an interesting technique to adaptation to global change.

Structural enrichment of mixed forests increases the stability of the system and the habitat value for wildlife (nesting and roosting facilities).

OBJECTIVE

How effective are conversion treatments in changing old coppice structure and species composition?

The conversion treatment caused changes in forest dynamics in the short term, diversifying the forest structure.