



As Long as it is Not My Land: Landowners and Oak Woodland Conservation in Spain and California

L. Huntsinger (1), J.L. Oviedo (2), and T. Plieninger (3)

(1) University of Berkeley, Environmental Science, Policy and Management, Berkeley, United States
(huntsinger@berkeley.edu), (2) Institute for Public Goods and Policies, Spanish Council for Scientific Research, Madrid, Spain, (3) Institute for Landscape Management, Junior Research Group on Ecosystem Services, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Berlin, Germany

In Spain and California, landowners have a crucial role to play in the conservation of oak woodlands. The value of environmental services from private oak woodlands used for extensive agriculture has drawn the attention of policymakers and conservationists, and policy strategies for maintenance of traditional extensive agriculture are emergent in both places. These strategies require landowner participation. Surveys of landowners in each place reveal similarities in management practices, goals, attitudes, and demographics, as well as some interesting points of divergence. Despite very different institutional and political contexts, landowner attitudes show some striking similarities. Both favor a degree of government protection of natural resources, but would prefer that this would not include regulation of activities on their own lands. With a relatively stable woodland ecologically, and a high rate of urban out-migration into woodland areas, the more visible initiatives in California today focus on landowner education, and tax relief for temporary or permanent restrictions on land conversion. Non-governmental organizations have taken an increasingly visible role in the brokering of purchased or donated land title restrictions for conservation. These programs have resulted in an apparent decline in oak harvest and some limitations on development, but have not often directly influenced regeneration or management on private lands. In contrast, with more stable patterns of population distribution and less stable woodland ecological dynamics, Spanish incentive programs approach regeneration and management issues more directly, with subsidies for oak planting and maintenance, and price advantages for the products of traditional agriculture. The results of a twenty-year longitudinal study in California show a shift towards an increasing focus on amenities by California oak woodland landowners, whether they are ranch owners with hundreds of hectares of woodland, or rachette owners with 10 hectares.