

Dear Editor,

Thanks a lot for the positive evaluation and smooth handling of this paper! Please find below our replies to the remaining minor issues raised by the reviewer, whom we would like to thank again for constructive remarks and eyes on the details!

Best regards, Juergen Kreyling, Rhena Schumann, Robert Weigel

The authors did an excellent job in incorporating the suggested points and the manuscript has improved a lot and is now considered as acceptable for publication.

Some last picky details:

Line 77: “organic litter” – can there be inorganic litter?

Reply: Valid argument, reformulated to ‘organic compounds’.

Line 139: “organic litter layer” – see above

Reply: We have deleted ‘organic’ here.

Line 150: table caption: “all climatic data is display as” – grammar

Reply: Corrected to ‘is displayed’.

Line 150: Unit for organic matter content

Reply: Thanks for spotting this! We have added: ‘(%)’.

Line 348: “organic and soil particles”: strange classification – does this mean that soil particles cannot be organic?

Reply: We have added ‘mineral’ before ‘soil’.

Line 406: “Phosphate is much less mobile in the soil than nitrate and, consequently, leaching of phosphate is not to be expected”: -True, phosphate is less mobile than nitrate, but recent studies show, that phosphate can be leached, although in small amounts, but this could have a significant influence on the long-term. This could be one reason for the observed “increasing P limitation with forest age is a global phenomenon” as you write in line 104 - I suggest to attenuate the conclusion in line 410

Reply: We have inserted in line 410: “in absence of phosphorus leaching” in order to attenuate the conclusion.

Line 408: “active N”: what is that? Do you mean “reactive”?

Reply: Yes, corrected accordingly.

Still inconsistent introduction and use of abbreviations: N, P ... e.g. line 365, line 400

Reply: We have now consistently used ‘nitrogen’, ‘carbon’ and ‘phosphorus’ in the text.