

Instructions to Authors: Journal of Environmental Quality

Scope

Contributions to JEQ that report original research or reviews and analyses, as well as datasets, dealing with aspects of environmental quality in natural and agricultural ecosystems will be considered from all disciplines, and from both members and nonmembers, by the editorial board. To be acceptable, a manuscript must make a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge or toward a better understanding of existing concepts. The study should define principles of broad applicability, be related to problems over a sizable geographic area, or be of potential interest to a representative number of scientists.

The five main sections in the journal are “Technical Reports,” containing original research contributions; “Reviews and Analyses,” which present scholarly reviews of the literature on an environmental process; “Technical Notes and Preliminary Communications,” which present and describe analytical techniques, laboratory and field equipment design, computer software, studies of limited scope or preliminary data with compelling results, and unique observations; “Environmental Issues,” including discussion of contemporary environmental issues from a combination of scientific, political, legislative, and regulatory perspectives; and “Dataset Papers,” which present and describe large or expansive datasets that are accessible to other researchers for developing new studies. See [“About Journal of Environmental Quality”](#) for more information on paper types. “Letters to the Editor” may also be accepted.

Manuscript Submission

[Download the JEQ manuscript submission template]

Submit manuscripts at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jeq>. Submissions to JEQ may not be previously published in their entirety or simultaneously submitted to any other scientific or technical journal. The [Publications Handbook & Style Manual](#) is the official guide for preparing and editing papers.

Creating the Manuscript File

Because Microsoft Word files are required for editing of the text, it is preferred that authors submit the manuscript as a Word file. The figures may be submitted as PDF, EPS, TIF, or JPEG files. See Chapter 5 of the Style Manual for further details.

Word Limits

Papers should be <7000 words, including abstract, headings, tables, and figures, where each table or figure (including table titles and figure captions) is equivalent to 300 words (600 for large tables and figures that take up an entire page). References are excluded. The suggested word limit for Reviews and Analyses and Environmental Issues papers is 12,000 words, excluding tables, figures, and references. The suggested word limit for Technical Notes and Preliminary Communications is 4000 to 5000 words, including tables and figures (each of which count for 300 words) and excluding references. Word limits do not apply to introductory papers to special sections.

Peer Review and Revision

All manuscripts submitted to JEQ undergo single blind peer review. Papers are assigned to a technical editor, who will assign an associate editor to solicit at least two reviews. After evaluating the completed reviews, the associate editor will recommend a decision to the technical editor. Authors will be prompted to provide a list of potential reviewers. These reviewers must not have a conflict of interest involving the authors or paper, and the editorial board has the right to not use any reviewers suggested by authors. See the [editorial policy](#) information page for additional information on review policy. All revisions to the manuscript during the review process will be made by the author only, and revisions will be given the same manuscript number, with an R number on the end (e.g., JEQ-2008-02-0024-RL.R1). Each revision has the opportunity for another round of review—the manuscript status

“awaiting reviewer selection” is automatic and does not indicate a re-submission. Authors have 30 days to review and return their manuscript following reviewer and associate editor comments. Manuscripts may be released if revisions are not received, and the paper will have to be submitted as a new manuscript. Soon after submission, the editorial board will decide whether send the paper through review. For papers that are reviewed, the average time from submission to final decision is about 60 days. It is common for accepted papers go through at least one revision.

ORCID iD

Beginning 1 July 2018, corresponding authors are required to use an ORCID iD when submitting a manuscript. For more information on ORCID, see www.orcid.org. We encourage all authors to list their ORCID iD in the manuscript.

Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review

As a scientific publisher, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA must make judgments about the correctness and relevance of manuscripts under consideration for publication. The Societies rely on qualified volunteers to review manuscripts and to serve on editorial boards to make these editorial decisions and to provide feedback to authors. In the vast majority of cases, this process works smoothly.

Should an author feel that the process was implemented incorrectly or that a review was biased, or poorly done, the author should first inform the Editor of that journal, and attempt to resolve the concern at that level. If the concern is not resolved, the author may appeal the decision to the Editors-in-Chief. Their decision will be final.

All volunteers involved in evaluating a manuscript will be assumed to have acted in an appropriate and professional manner unless and until it is demonstrated to be otherwise. The Societies' volunteers will keep all those involved in an appeal informed of the process, and will always be cognizant that such investigations are difficult for all concerned, and will use their best judgment regarding tact and confidentiality.

Plagiarism Screening

Papers submitted to JEQ are screened for plagiarism prior to being sent for review. If there appears to be major repetition from other sources, the Editor will evaluate the duplication and take appropriate action as warranted.

Language Editing

Particularly if English is not your first language, you may wish to have your paper edited for language. This is not a mandatory step, but may help to ensure that the scientific content of your paper is fully understood by journal editors and reviewers. After you submit to an ASA-CSSA-SSSA journal, if there are language issues with your paper, the Technical or Associate Editor may recommend the ACSESS English Language Editing Service. There are two levels of service available for a fee. Please see the [Language and Writing Help](#) page for more details. Language editing does not guarantee that your manuscript will be accepted for publication. Authors are liable for all costs associated with this and other services.

Article Requirements

Accepted manuscripts are prepared for typesetting using Microsoft Word. Therefore, authors are strongly encouraged to use this software during manuscript composition. Rich-format text and TeX files are not acceptable. The file must be double-spaced and line-numbered. The file should contain the following elements:

- Title page (including author byline and affiliations)
- Core ideas
- Abstract
- Abbreviations
- Text
- Supplemental Material paragraph (if applicable)

- Conflict of Interest statement
- Acknowledgments (optional)
- References list
- Figure captions
- Tables*
- Figures* (figures may also be submitted separately as high-resolution image files in the following acceptable formats: EPS, TIF, PDF, or JPEG)

*Tables and figures (review quality) with captions should be placed into the text document at first mention. Figures of accepted papers must be submitted separately for production as high-resolution image files in the following acceptable formats: EPS, TIF, PDF, or JPEG.

Math. If you have equations, please use the INSERT EQUATION function in Microsoft Word or use a program such as MathType.

Title Page. The title page should include:

- A short (12 words or less, not counting conjunctions, prepositions, or articles) title that accurately identifies and describes the manuscript content.
- An author affiliation list, with author name(s) and complete address(es).
- An abbreviations list, with key abbreviations that are used repeatedly throughout the manuscript. The list should not include SI units, chemical element symbols, variables, or abbreviations listed in the style manual as not needing a definition.
- The corresponding author's email address.

Core Ideas. Include 3 to 5 summary statements that convey the core findings of the article. These statements should emphasize the novel aspects and impacts of the research on scientific progress and environmental problem solving. Each statement must be 85 characters or less (spaces included). The purpose of these highlights is to give a concise summary that will be helpful in assessing the suitability of the manuscript for publication in JEQ and for selecting appropriate reviewers. If the article is accepted, the core ideas will be published with the article.

Abstract. Include an informative, self-explanatory abstract. The abstract should be a single paragraph of 250 words or less. It should be specific, telling why and how the study was made, what the results were, and why they were important. The abstract should read like a "mini-manuscript" with 1 to 2 sentences each for a justification/rationale, objective(s), methods, results, and conclusion. Present the most significant results and use quantitative terms where possible. For specific details on how to develop your abstract, please refer to chapter 1 of the Publications Handbook and Style Manual provided at <https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/style/>.

Text. The main text of the manuscript typically includes an introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, and a conclusion. The Results and Discussion sections may be combined into one section. The author(s) can either (i) include a separate Conclusion, which will appear as a subheading under the Discussion section, or (ii) provide the conclusion (with no heading) at the end of the Discussion section. In either case, the conclusions should be no longer than 200 words. Within the 200 words, the conclusions and implications of the work should be provided. In some instances, no conclusions may have been drawn from the study. In this case, the implications of the study should be provided. In other words, if the author(s) decides to forego the inclusion of a Conclusion subheading within the Discussion section, then the final paragraph of the Discussion section should provide the conclusions (if any) and the implications of the study.

A final **acknowledgments** paragraph may be included.

References. When preparing the references list, refer to a recent issue of JEQ and/or [chapter 1](#) of the Publications Handbook & Style Manual and note the general style for reference list entries, in addition to following these guidelines:

- Do not number the references list

- Arrange the list alphabetically by the surnames of the first authors and then by the second and third authors.
- Single-authored articles should precede multiple-authored articles for which the individual is first author.
- Two or more articles by the same author(s) are listed chronologically; two or more in the same year are indicated by a, b, c, etc.
- Only literature that is available through libraries or other readily accessible public media can be cited. Material that does not meet this standard should be cited as personal communication or unpublished data.

Examples:

Journal article

Smith, D.T., D.L. Johnson, and J.K. Thomas. 2001. Phosphorus losses in irrigation runoff. *J. Environ. Qual.* 30:2569–2580.

Book

Lindsay, W.L. 1979. *Chemical equilibria in soils*. John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Chapter in a book

Nelson, D.W., and L.E. Sommers. 1982. Total carbon, organic carbon, and organic matter. In: A.L. Page et al., editors, *Methods of soil analysis*. Part 2. 2nd ed. Agron. Monogr. 9. ASA and SSSA, Madison, WI. p. 539–579.

Conflicts of Interest Statement. Authors should include a statement just before the References section that explains any conflicts of interest. If there are none, authors should explicitly state that there are no conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest are anything that would interfere with, or a reasonable person could perceive to interfere with, the fully transparent and objective presentation of the paper. Potential conflicts could concern intellectual property, relationships with other entities, or financial gain but are not limited to these issues.

Tables. Compose tables using the word processor's table feature (i.e., the table should have defined cells—do not create tables by using the space bar and/or tab key). Tables should not duplicate matter that is presented in figures. Use the following symbols for footnotes in the order shown: †, ‡, §, ¶, #, ††, ‡‡, etc. The symbols *, **, and *** are always used to indicate statistical significance at the 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001 probability levels, respectively, and are not used for other footnotes. As with figure captions, spell out abbreviations on first mention.

Figures. Authors who are including figures in the manuscript may use any software to create figures, so long as they can provide high-resolution files. Figures and their captions should be placed into the text document at first mention. It often helps to also provide figures separately; name these files with the author name or (partial or complete) title and figure number. At the revision or acceptance stage, please name files with the manuscript number and figure number (e.g., jeq-2017-01-0001-fig1). Use a minimum line weight of 0.5 point (thinner lines will not reproduce well). Screening and/or shaded patterns often do not reproduce well; whenever possible, use black lines on a white background in place of shaded patterns. Authors can shorten manuscript length by supplying figures that can be reduced to fit in a single journal column. Letters and numbers in the final printed figure (i.e., after reduction) should range from 8- to 12-point type. As an example, a 16-cm-wide figure should have 16-point type, so that when the figure is reduced to fit in a single column (approximately 8 cm), the type is reduced to 8-point size. Color figures are acceptable and are the default of the online version.

Insert the figure captions in the file following the figure as well as after the references list. Spell out abbreviations on first mention in figure captions, even if they have already been defined in the text. (The reader should be able to understand the figure content without referring back to the text).

Style

See the [Publications Handbook & Style Manual](#) for information regarding specific style issues. The following address some common style questions:

- Use a serial comma before the final item in a list of three or more items; for example: “The use of fertilizers increased by 12, 14, 27%, respectively.”
- Both the common and chemical name of pesticides must be given when first mentioned. For example: “Atrazine (2-chloro-4-ethylamino-6-isopropylamino-1,3,5-trithiazine) was most persistent.”
- The Latin binomial or trinomial and authority must be shown for all plants, insects, and pathogens at first listing. For example: “In this experiment, 15.5-ha corn (*Zea mays* L.) fields were studied.”
- Manufacturer information must be included after first mention of a commercially available product. For example: “Samples were analyzed with a graphite furnace (HGA 600; PerkinElmer).”
- Software and software manuals must include a references list entry (e.g., “SAS Institute. 1990. SAS user’s guide: Statistics. SAS Inst., Cary, NC.”)
- SI units must be used in all manuscripts. Non-SI units may be added in parentheses.

Official Sources

- Spelling: Merriam-Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary
- Chemical names: PubChem (<https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>)
- Soil series descriptions: USDA–NRCS Official Soil Series Descriptions (<https://soilseries.scegov.usda.gov/osdname.aspx>)
- Fungal nomenclature: Fungi on Plants and Plant Products in the United States (APS Press)
- Journal abbreviations: Chemical Abstracts Service Source Index (CASSI; American Chemical Society, <http://cassi.cas.org/>)

Changes to Author Byline

From time to time, authors’ names are either added or removed from a given manuscript between the time of submission and publication. In situations such as this, the ethical and responsible manner of handling this type of change is for the lead author to advise the author being added or removed of the change and to notify, in writing, the journal editor and managing editor of JEQ for approval. In addition, all coauthors should notify the managing editor that they are aware of and approve of the change.

Consent and Permissions

The submitting author should have sent each living coauthor a draft copy of the manuscript and have obtained the coauthors’ assent to coauthorship of it. Authors are responsible for obtaining all permissions for use of figures from other publishers and should supply these releases at the time the accepted manuscript is forwarded for production. Authors are also responsible for obtaining permission from individuals whose images are included in photographs. Please note that ASA, CSSA, and SSSA reserve the right to publish and republish any images you submit with a manuscript.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material may be included in the online version of articles. The material must be submitted along with the original manuscript and will undergo peer review. Authors are encouraged to submit materials that contribute to the content and quality of the article or to use supplemental material as a means to shorten the text of manuscripts. Ancillary information such as some experimental data, including schematics of apparatus and maps of study sites, or material of interest mainly to specialists, are examples of potential supplemental material. When using supplemental material to shorten the text of a manuscript, keep in mind that the Materials and Methods section should provide enough detail to allow the reader to determine whether the interpretations are supported by the data.

Supplemental tables and figures should be cited in order in the main manuscript, as Supplemental Table S1, etc.

Include a short (one- or two-sentence) paragraph, titled “Supplemental Material,” describing the supplemental material in the main manuscript directly preceding the reference list.

Material. Supplemental material should be formatted with a cover sheet listing authors and manuscript title, and the number of pages, figures, and tables. Pages must be numbered consecutively, starting with S1. Tables and figures should be numbered Supplemental Table or Supplemental Fig. S1, S2, etc. The managing editor may limit the quantity of supplemental material posted.

File Types. The supplement should consist of a single PDF or MS Word file (rather than a series of files with individual images or structures). Other file types, such as Quick Time or Excel, may be allowed. Videos are allowed; to keep file size down, please compress video files if possible. Contact the managing editor with questions about file types. The following are not allowed: executables (.exe) of any kind, java script, and TeX.

Revised Manuscripts

At submission of a revised manuscript, the author should submit a marked version and a clean version of the manuscript. The marked version should clearly identify the differences between the original submission and the revised submission. The preferred method of indicating the changes is to use the Track Changes function in Word.

Errata

Errata may be used by the authors of a paper to correct errors and omissions that affect the integrity of the version of record that are identified after publication. All additions and corrections are subject to editorial approval and must be approved by all coauthors before submission; corrections of minor errors or omissions will not be published. Send all errata requests to the journal’s managing editor.

Policy for Environmental Modeling Papers

The editorial policy for the consideration of environmental modeling papers is very explicit. Modeling papers are only considered if they provide measured data to validate the model. However, there are exceptions to this rule. If obtaining measured validation data is an “undue burden” for the authors, then an uncertainty analysis using Monte Carlo simulations or first-order uncertainty analysis must be provided in place of the measured data. An “undue burden” is defined as an onerous financial or safety burden. For example, providing measured data to validate a regional-scale non-point source pollutant model would pose an onerous financial burden because of the tremendous number of samples required. Another example is obtaining measured data for a contaminant that poses an extreme danger, such as plutonium or dioxin. This is regarded as an onerous health and safety burden. Ideally, a modeling paper should provide measured data for validation and should also provide an uncertainty analysis to establish the reliability of the measurements, except in those cases where measured data poses an undue burden, in which case an uncertainty analysis is sufficient.

Policy for Monitoring/Observation Papers

Monitoring studies are only considered if they test a hypothesis that will advance our knowledge and understanding of environmental concepts. An environmental monitoring study is only acceptable for consideration if the monitoring procedures/techniques are put into context to allow a better understanding of concepts that provide a significant scientific impact in collecting data for broad application and interest.

Policy for Dataset Papers

Dataset papers present large or expansive dataset(s) and comprise two parts: a dataset or group of datasets and the metadata (manuscript), which describes the content, quality, structure, and potential uses of the dataset(s). Limited statistical analysis of the data may be included in the metadata, but more detailed analysis of datasets could form the core of a regular research paper to be published in JEQ or elsewhere. Dataset papers are subject to full peer-review; the review process will evaluate the scientific significance and overall quality of the dataset(s) first and further examine the manuscript to ensure a high standard of usability with regard to the dataset(s) that it documents. Please refer to “[Dataset Paper Author and Reviewer Instructions](#)” for detailed instructions.

Publication Fees

Authors will pay production charges of \$0 per page for the first seven printed pages and \$100 for each published page over seven for members (\$200 for each published page over seven for nonmembers). The corresponding author must be a member in order to receive the member rate.

Authors must purchase any reprints they wish to order.

Open Access and Archive Deposit Policy

Authors have the option of paying an additional \$800 or \$1300 fee (see options below), above the usual publication charge, to make the article open access (freely available without subscription) at the time of publication on the JEQ Web site (<https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/jeq>). Authors may post a PDF version of their accepted papers on their own personal sites and/or their employer's sites after a 12-month embargo period. The doi link must appear on the PDF. Authors choosing the open access option may post the final published version of their papers anywhere, with no restrictions. Open access options are as follows.

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