

Reviewer Guidelines for Ecosphere

Quality peer reviews are essential for ensuring the quality of scholarly journals. Your evaluation will play a major role in our decision as to whether to accept a manuscript for publication. We trust you to be prompt, fair, respectful of the rights of the authors, respectful of our obligations to the readership, and to evaluate the manuscript carefully and in depth. At the same time, on behalf of the ESA membership, we are very grateful for the time and effort you invest in the review process.

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Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to review for the online, open-access journal, Ecosphere. This journal has the same high-quality standards of the other journals published by the Ecological Society of America, but the aim is for manuscripts to be reviewed quickly and published rapidly if accepted. Please read the following guidelines to ensure that your review provides the information needed for the Subject-matter Editor (SME) to make a prompt decision about this manuscript.

1. **Rapid Review:** The emphasis is speed of publication that requires rapid response from both editors and reviewers. Reviewers should respond within a short period of time (typically 1-2 weeks) to maintain a rapid decision and publication schedule.

2. **Short, concise reviews:** Reviews should consist of a few short paragraphs commenting upon the strengths and weaknesses of the submission and highlighting areas that need revision.

Detailed reviews providing extensive suggestions for revision are not expected and are discouraged if they cannot be completed in the timeframe expected. Rather, a typical Ecosphere review will be concise, emphasizing the points that the authors need to take into account before publication. The review should assess the following criteria:

- The importance and interest in the ideas and results to the readers of ESA journals
- The scientific soundness, coherence, and support by the evidence and logic presented
- The organization, concision, and clarity of the writing
- Whether there are major deficiencies that require a substantial revision

When reviewers identify major deficiencies, the SME or Editor-in-Chief (EIC) will reject the manuscript. However, the SME or EIC can invite a resubmission to Ecosphere that addresses these deficiencies if the other criteria are met.

5. **Limited copyediting:** Authors are responsible for editing and formatting their manuscripts. Reviewers are not expected to provide detailed comments on the style or format of the text. Manuscripts requiring extensive editing should be rejected.

Confidentiality

Each manuscript is a privileged communication. Please do not show any manuscript to, or discuss a manuscript with, anyone else, except to solicit assistance with a technical point. If you feel a colleague is more qualified than you to review the manuscript, do not pass the manuscript on to that person without first requesting permission from the journal's editorial staff (esajournals@esa.org) to do so. Your review and your recommendation should also be considered confidential.

Mentorship (Joint Review)

If you have one or more graduate students or postdocs who could benefit from being involved in the review process, we strongly encourage you to send a request to the journal's editorial staff (esajournals@esa.org) with the name and email address of the person. Staff can add the mentee as a reviewer and you can work together on a joint review. In most cases this arrangement is beneficial both as a review and as an opportunity to provide valuable training for the next generation of reviewers and potential authors.

All participants in a joint review can submit the same review and get credit in our database and annual list of reviewers.

It is very important that each reviewer submit a copy of the review, even if the others involved in the joint review have already done so. The system will not send the manuscript to Subject Matter Editor for a final decision until all reviews are in. It is a common issue with joint reviews to have one member not submit a review and this can delay a manuscript for several weeks. Once you have accepted the invitation, please let us know so we can make sure your due date is synced with any other joint reviewers. We do not require the participants in a joint review to submit identical reviews, even though this is the most common situation.

Conflicts of Interest

If you feel you might have difficulty writing an objective review, please alert the journal's editorial staff (esajournals@esa.org) immediately. If your previous or present connection with the author(s) or an author's institution might be construed as creating a conflict of interest, but no actual conflict exists, please discuss this issue in your confidential comments to the editor. If in doubt, please contact the journal's editorial staff at esajournals@esa.org.

Open Research Policy

ESA has adopted a society-wide Open Research Policy for its publications to further support scientific exploration and preservation, allow a full assessment of published research, and streamline policies across our family of journals.

As a reviewer, we do not expect you to perform the task of making sure an author follows all parts of the Open Research Policy, nor fully examine any linked data in detail, but please keep in mind the following points during your review:

- Has the author provided all novel code as supporting information? Authors are required to submit any novel code with their manuscript at the time of submission. If you find a manuscript is missing novel code, please include this in your review.
- Are there discrepancies within the manuscript regarding the presentation of data (i.e., will the proposed data statement on the title page provide all necessary underlying data, or should additional material be supplied)?

Fairness and objectivity

If the research reported in this manuscript is flawed, criticize the science, not the scientist. Harsh words in a review will cause the reader to doubt your objectivity. In this situation, your criticisms will be rejected, even if they are correct. Comments directed to the author should convince the author that:

- (1) you have read the entire manuscript carefully.
- (2) your criticisms are objective and correct, are not merely differences of opinion, and are intended to help the author improve his or her manuscript.
- (3) you are qualified to provide an expert opinion about the research reported in this manuscript.

If you fail to win the author's respect and appreciation, much of your effort will have been wasted.

Anonymity

You may sign your review if you wish. If you choose to remain anonymous, avoid comments to the authors that might serve as clues to your identity and be careful about annotating the manuscript. Unless you indicate otherwise (such as by signing your remarks for the authors), we will assume you wish to remain anonymous.

Comments for the Editor

Please provide a short statement about the contributions of the manuscript, its appropriateness for the journal, and the degree and type of revisions required before publication.

Comments for the Author

Briefly identify the major contributions of the manuscript and its major strengths and weaknesses. Please do not indicate your recommendation of whether or not the manuscript should be published.

Concisely emphasize your most significant points from the following categories:

1. Presentation

- a. Does the manuscript tell a cohesive story?
- b. Is a tightly reasoned argument evident throughout the manuscript? Where does the manuscript wander from this argument?
- c. Do the title, abstract, key words, introduction, and conclusions accurately and consistently reflect the major point(s) of the manuscript?
- d. Is the writing concise, easy to follow, and interesting?

2. Length

- a. What portions of the manuscript should be expanded, condensed, combined, or deleted?

3. Methods

- a. Are they appropriate and described clearly enough that the work could be repeated?

4. Data presentation

- a. Are all tables and figures necessary, clearly labeled, and readily interpretable?
- b. Has the author provided novel code that is required to replicate their analyses?

5. Statistical design and analyses

- a. Are they appropriate and correct?
- b. For further advice, consult our Guidelines for Statistical Analysis and Data Presentation.

6. Interpretation

- a. Are the major contributions of the manuscript clearly stated and justified?
- b. Are any of the results counterintuitive?

7. Errors

- a. Point out errors in technique, fact, calculation, or interpretation.

8. Citations

- a. Are pertinent references cited?

FAQ

Q: How do I know my review has been submitted?

When your review has been successfully submitted, you will be taken to a new page and will find a message at the top of the screen that confirms your review was received. You will also receive an automatically generated message on behalf of the Subject-matter Editor confirming receipt.

Q: I'm trying to submit my review, but I can't proceed. What's going on?

If you have filled in the review form, but you cannot proceed, it is likely that you missed a required field in the review form. Required fields are marked by a red "*". Please check the form to see if there are any fields you missed. If you have checked the form and you still cannot proceed, please create a PDF copy of your review (for reference) and contact the journal's editorial staff at esajournals@esa.org.

Q: Who should I contact about a possible conflict of interest?

If you are unsure about whether you have a conflict of interest, either before or after accepting an invitation, please contact the journal's editorial staff at esajournals@esa.org.

Q: How do I upload a file that only the Editor will see?

When you upload a file into the form, you can select "For Editor Only" to ensure the file will only be seen by the Editor and the journal's editorial staff and will not be forwarded to the author.