Chapter 3. Specific Journal Editorial Procedures

The procedures for handling manuscripts and the duties of individual editorial board members vary not only from Society to Society and from journal to journal, but sometimes also within a journal. This chapter outlines those procedures. Chapter 5 gives the histories and makeup of the editorial boards of the journals.

PUBLISHING PRIVILEGES

Membership in one or more of the three societies is no longer a requirement for publishing in any ASA–CSSA–SSSA journal. Some of those journals, however, assess a fee to nonmembers to cover the costs that are paid for by member dues. See the mastheads and “Instructions to Authors” (in some journals, “Suggestions for Contributors”) of specific journals to see if such a fee applies to it.

To avoid this nonmember fee in these journals, a person must be an active member at the time the manuscript is accepted for publication by the designated member of the editorial board. The term active member is defined as either active, sustaining member representative, certification, emeritus, graduate student, or dues-paying undergraduate student member of one or more of the three societies.

AGRONOMY JOURNAL

A contribution to Agronomy Journal must be prepared according to instructions given in the Publications Handbook and Style Manual (www.agronomy.org/publications/style). One of the requirements is that the paper be prepared in a way that will allow it to receive a double-blind review. Manuscripts are submitted to Agronomy Journal electronically via an online manuscript submission system.

When a paper is submitted, the editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to a technical editor, who then assigns it to an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

With the advent of the electronic system, the time in review has decreased, and the system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.
Research Papers (and Notes and Unique Phenomena)

The editor chooses the appropriate technical editor to supervise the review of the manuscript and assigns the paper. The technical editor assigns an associate editor. The associate editor determines if the manuscript is, indeed, ready for review. If there is a question about this, associate editors are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor normally serves as one of the reviewers of the paper (unless the subject matter is too far outside his or her area of expertise). The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript. To speed the review process, the associate editor normally lines up a total of three reviewers at the outset.

During the revision process, associate editors need to keep in mind that they do not have the authority to accept or release a paper, and should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee that “if you make these changes the paper will be accepted and published.” Corresponding authors are given about 1 month to complete revisions, or their papers are subject to release.

Once the associate editor reaches a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, he or she notifies the technical editor via the electronic system.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers’ comments and the associate editor’s recommendation. If in agreement with that recommendation, the technical editor may:

• Accept the paper with no additional changes. In doing this, the technical editor selects this recommendation and the Headquarters office is notified of the accepted paper.

• Agree that the paper is worthy of publication, but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance. The technical editor would then work with the author (usually through the associate editor) to clear up any missed or overlooked points (most often involving scientific and technical details). Once the paper is accepted, the production continues as outlined in the previous point.

• Release the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action through the electronic system, which includes a message that details the reason(s) for the release. The author will be able to read the reviewers’ comments through their manuscript record. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor would at least invite the corresponding author to submit future papers to the journal and might also encourage the clearing up of the technical problems and resubmitting of that manuscript for further consideration. Papers that are resubmissions are usually noted as such by the corresponding author.

The managing editor sees to it that the corresponding author is kept informed of the production process and that the final steps of copy editing and publishing are carried out. Appeals of release decisions are handled by the Editor.

Letters to the Editor

The editor receives all letters via the electronic system and, depending on content, may send them out for peer review. If a letter refers to a published paper, a copy of the letter should be sent to the corresponding author of the published paper, inviting a response. If there is a response, it is published along with the letter.

Letters are submitted electronically and are assigned a registration number similar to that for scientific papers. If the letter is accepted, the Headquarters office is notified via the electronic system and the letter is scheduled for the next available issue.
Forum Papers

Forum papers provide a venue for discussion or presentation of current agronomic issues. The editor receives these papers electronically, assigns them a registration number, and consults with one or more technical editors regarding the paper’s acceptability for publication.

Once the Forum paper is acceptable for publication, the Headquarters office is notified electronically.

JOURNAL OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND LIFE SCIENCES EDUCATION

Manuscripts are submitted to Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education (JNRLSE) electronically via an online manuscript submission system and must be prepared according to instructions given in the Publications Handbook and Style Manual (www.agronomy.org/publications/style).

When a paper is submitted, the editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

With the advent of the electronic system, the time in review has decreased, and the system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.

When the associate editor is assigned a paper, he or she determines if it is, indeed, ready for review. If there is a question about this, associate editors are urged to discuss their concerns with the editor before assigning outside reviewers.

Corresponding authors have 3 months to complete revisions, or their papers are subject to release.

Associate editors of JNRLSE do not have the authority to accept papers for publication or to release them. Associate editors notify the editor of their recommendation and the editor makes the final decision.

Other editorial responsibilities and procedures are similar to those outlined for Agronomy Journal.

Appeals of releases are handled by the ASA Editor-in-Chief.

CROP SCIENCE

Manuscripts are submitted to Crop Science electronically via an online manuscript submission system, and must be prepared according to the Publications Handbook and Style Manual (www.agronomy.org/publications/style). Crop Science periodically publishes its “Instructions to Authors” that have the most recent requirements for manuscript preparation and submission.

When a paper is submitted, the editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to a technical editor, who then assigns it to an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

With the electronic system, the time in review has decreased, and the system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.
Corresponding authors have about 2 months to complete revisions, or their papers are subject to release. Other editorial responsibilities and procedures are similar to those outlined for *Agronomy Journal*.

Appeals of releases are handled by the journal’s editor.

**Papers Handled by Technical Editors**

Papers submitted to technical editors go through a process similar to that described above for *Agronomy Journal*. The technical editor assigns an associate editor who handles the review and revision of the paper and recommends acceptance or rejection to the technical editor.

**Papers Handled by Associate Editors**

An associate editor in C-5 is assigned turfgrass papers, and they are reviewed and revised by that person with the assistance of outside volunteer reviewers. The C-5 associate editor has the authority to accept or reject the paper.

Cell biology and molecular genetics papers are assigned to a C-7 associate editor and reviewed and revised by that person and one or two other C-7 associate editors. The person who was assigned the manuscript has the authority to accept or reject it.

**Papers Handled by the Editor**

The editor receives all letters to the editor, review and interpretation papers, and perspectives papers via the electronic system. These are typically reviewed by the editor, one or more technical editors, or ad-hoc reviewers. The final accept–release decision is made by the editor.

These papers are submitted electronically and are assigned a registration number similar to that for scientific papers. Upon acceptance, the Headquarters office is notified via the electronic system and the paper is scheduled for the next available issue.

**THE PLANT GENOME**

Manuscripts are submitted to *The Plant Genome* (TPG) electronically via an online manuscript submission system and must be prepared according to instructions given in the *Publications Handbook and Style Manual* (www.agronomy.org/publications/style).

When a paper is submitted, the editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

The electronic system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.

When the associate editor is assigned a paper, he or she determines if it is, indeed, ready for review. If there is a question about this, associate editors are urged to discuss their concerns with the editor before assigning outside reviewers.

Associate editors of TPG do not have the authority to accept papers for publication or to release them. Associate editors notify the editor of their recommendation and the editor makes the final decision.

The remaining steps toward publication are similar to those for *Agronomy Journal*. Appeals of editorial decisions are handled by the editor.
**JOURNAL OF PLANT REGISTRATIONS**

Manuscripts are submitted to *Journal of Plant Registrations* (JPR) electronically via an online manuscript submission system and must be prepared according to instructions given in the *Publications Handbook and Style Manual* (www.agronomy.org/publications/style).

When a paper is submitted, the editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to a technical editor, who then assigns it to an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

The electronic system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.

When the associate editor is assigned a paper, he or she determines if it is, indeed, ready for review. If there is a question about this, associate editors are urged to discuss their concerns with the editor before assigning outside reviewers.

Associate editors of JPR do not have the authority to accept papers for publication or to release them. Associate editors notify the editor of their recommendation and the editor makes the final decision.

The remaining steps toward publication are similar to those for *Agronomy Journal*. Appeals of editorial decisions are handled by the editor.

**SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY OF AMERICA JOURNAL**

A contribution to *Soil Science Society of America Journal* (SSSAJ) must be prepared according to instructions given in the *Publications Handbook and Style Manual* (www.agronomy.org/publications/style). One of the requirements is that the paper be prepared in a way that will allow it to receive a double-blind review. (For further details, see SSSA Publication Policy, usually published in each January–February issue of the journal.)

Manuscripts are submitted to SSSAJ electronically via an online manuscript submission system. When a paper is submitted, the editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to a technical editor, who then assigns it to an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

The electronic system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.

A corresponding author is given up to 3 months to revise a paper, or it will be released and given a new registration number and date of receipt if resubmitted.

The balance of the procedures are similar to those for *Agronomy Journal*. Appeals of editorial decisions are handled by the SSSA Editor-in-Chief.

**JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

Manuscripts are submitted to *Journal of Environmental Quality* (JEQ) electronically via an online manuscript submission system and must be prepared according to instructions given in the *Publications Handbook and Style Manual* (www.agronomy.org/publications/style).

When a paper is submitted, the editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information.
The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to a technical editor, who then assigns it to an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

The electronic system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.

When the associate editor is assigned a paper, he or she determines if it is, indeed, ready for review. If there is a question about this, associate editors are urged to discuss their concerns with the editor before assigning outside reviewers.

Corresponding authors have 3 months in which to revise manuscripts or their papers are subject to release.

Associate editors of JEQ do not have the authority to accept papers for publication or to release them. Associate editors notify the editor of their recommendation and the editor makes the final decision.

When a paper is ready for publication the author is formally asked to work with an associate editor to write a three to five sentence executive summary of the paper.

The remaining steps toward publication are similar to those for Agronomy Journal. Appeals of editorial decisions are handled by the ASA Editor-in-Chief.

VADOSE ZONE JOURNAL

A contribution to Vadose Zone Journal (VZJ) must be prepared according to instructions given in the Publications Handbook and Style Manual (www.agronomy.org/publications/style).

Manuscripts are submitted to VZJ electronically via an online manuscript submission system. When a paper is submitted, the editor or co-editor assigns it a registration number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment message. The editor assigns the paper to an associate editor, who then assigns reviewers via the electronic system.

The electronic system provides editors, reviewers, and authors a way to see the status of articles. The manuscript tracking system provides the means to handle nearly all of the review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence within the system.

A corresponding author is given up to 3 months to revise a paper, or it will be released and given a new registration number and date of receipt if resubmitted.

The balance of the procedures are similar to those for Agronomy Journal, except co-editors are used instead of technical editors.

Appeals of editorial decisions are handled by the SSSA Editor-in-Chief.