Reviewer #2

Instructions to Reviewers of Manuscripts Submitted for Publication in the *Soil Science Society of America Journal*

Title: _

Registration no. S97-237.

Referred to Ruth D. Yanai
SUNY, Coll. Envtl. Sci & Forestry

On (date) 9/3/97

Return to Associate Editor by 9/30/97. if possible!

Please recommend specific disposition of the enclosed manuscript in one of the ways indicated below. Prepare three copies of your review on separate plain paper so that neither you nor your institution can be identified. Mail the *three copies of your review along with your recommendation in a separate letter*, to the associate editor whose name appears below. Please return the manuscript. **It is a violation of copyright law to photocopy the manuscript for your own use.**

Check one:

- ☐ 1. *The manuscript should be accepted for publication without change or with minor alterations to be left to the author.* This recommendation alone is an acceptable report. But, if minor alterations are suggested they should be indicated in the separate review.
- ☐ 2. *The manuscript should be revised, with due attention to comments of reviewers, before acceptance for publication.* A separate review in sufficient detail to alert the author to needed changes should accompany this recommendation.
- ☐ 3. *The manuscript should be revised with due attention to comments of reviewers, and possibly reviewed again before acceptance for publication.* A separate review should accompany this recommendation.
- ☐ 4. *The manuscript should be rewritten before it is in suitable condition for detailed review.* If you have good reason to believe that the manuscript does not represent the best efforts of the author, it may be returned without detailed review. Comments of a convincing nature and examples are needed by the associate editor and technical editor to aid them in arriving at a decision and in communication with the author. Good judgment is needed in the use of this recommendation inasmuch as some inexperienced but otherwise deserving authors can be materially helped by constructive criticism in the preparation of the present manuscript as well as in the preparation of future manuscripts.
- ☐ 5. *The manuscript should be released to the author for scientific reasons.* Adequate justification is expected with this recommendation. Documentation is preferable, but if you do not take the time to include careful documentation you should be prepared to do so on request. Suggestions for improvement are not needed.

Prompt attention to the manuscript will be appreciated both by the authors and by the editors.

If it appears that you will be unable to furnish a review within 3 weeks, please return the manuscript at once so that it can be sent to another reviewer.

Please refer to *The Reviewer's Guide*, printed on the back of this form. The *SSSA Publication Policy* (revised 2 Nov. 1995) is published in 60:1–3, 1996, of the *SSSA Journal*.

Thanks!

John McColl
Associate Editor

U. California
Berkeley
Institution

9/3/97.
Date

5/96

The Reviewer's Guide

The policy of the *Soil Science Society of America Journal* is to publish papers containing original research findings, which are submitted on a volunteer basis, and review papers, which are solicited by the Editorial Board. This guide is designed specifically as an aid in reviewing volunteer papers but the general philosophy applies equally as well to review papers.

Why Manuscripts are Reviewed

Manuscripts are reviewed prior to acceptance for publication for the following reasons:

1. To solicit opinions as to the appropriateness of the subject. In this connection, original research findings suitable for publication in the *Soil Science Society of America Journal* are interpreted as the outcome of scholarly inquiry, investigation, or experimentation having as an objective the development of new concepts, the revision, refinement, extension, or verification of existing concepts, the application of existing concepts to new situations, or the development of new or improved techniques in some aspect of soil science.

2. To aid in maintaining a high standard of quality in manuscripts accepted for publication. Quality includes such factors as originality of subject or applications, appropriateness of methods, accuracy of mathematical equations and computations, validity of conclusions, organization of subject matter, clarity, and correctness of grammar.

The Reviewer's Burden

Reviewers are usually selected for their maturity and competence in the technical subject matter in question, so that they may offer appropriate constructive comments without the necessity of undertaking prolonged study of background material. Reviewers frequently are talented individuals whose abilities are in demand for many important activities. Because of the pressure of other duties, the temptation is constantly present to slight the review of manuscripts, a task that yields no remuneration and little or no personal recognition or advancement. As you examine each manuscript, therefore, bear in mind the fact that others have performed this service for you in the past, and you are now in a position to return this service and advance the profession. Do it to the best of your ability.

Checklist for Detailed Comments

1. *Title*—Does the title describe adequately the subject of the manuscript? Can you suggest any improvement in wording?

2. *Abstract*—Does the abstract tell in brief the reasons for the study, methods used, results, and conclusions? Abstracts are the most widely read section of a paper.

3. *Review of Literature*—Does the author give due credit to relevant contributions of others? Does the author place the contribution in proper perspective in relation to the state of knowledge of the subject? Is the number of literature citations excessive?

4. *Objectives*—Is the statement of objectives adequate and appropriate in view of the subject matter?

5. *Methods*—Are the methods appropriate for the purpose for which they are used? Have suitable measurements been performed to test the validity? Have proper control measurements been made? Are the methods described in sufficient detail to permit a reasonably competent reader to repeat the work; or, if not, are sources cited in which the appropriate detail is given?

6. *Clarity*—Does the author write the information in a relatively simple, straightforward manner that can be readily understood by a reasonably competent reader? Do the author's words say what you think they mean?

7. *Organization*—Does the manuscript develop the subject logically and effectively?

8. *Duplication*—Does the manuscript repeat unnecessarily the published work of the author or others? Can the manuscript be shortened without loss of content by condensing two or more tables into one? Are all the figures needed if the same data are given also in tabular form? Is there unnecessary duplication in the text?

9. *Calculations*—In a few instances selected at random can you verify the calculations made by the author?

10. *Effectiveness of Presentation of Data*—Should data presented by the author in graphs be given instead in tables because of the importance of the absolute numerical values or the ineffectiveness of the graphs? Should data presented by the author in tables be shown instead or also in graphs?

11. *Correspondence of Text with Tables and Figures*—Are all tables and figures referred to in the text? Do statements in the text correspond to the content of tables and figures?

12. *Titles of Tables and Figures*—Do the titles state the content? Can you suggest any improvement in wording?

13. *Headings in Tables*—Is the interpretation clear and unequivocal and in the correct SI units?

14. *Graphs*—Do they contain all the observations, or have some been omitted? Is the plotting of data accurate?

15. *Conclusions*—Are they adequate? Are they supported by the data?

16. *Conjecture*—Does the author distinguish clearly between conjecture and fact? Is the amount of conjecture excessive?

17. *References*—Are there any obvious errors such as misspelled names of authors?

18. *Editorial Style*—Does the manuscript conform to current editorial style and format, including SI units?

Qualities of First-class Reviews

1. *Objectivity*—Strive to be objective in your evaluation. Try to make your evaluation on strictly scientific grounds without bias from personal reasons or professional jealousies. Objectivity in evaluations is difficult to attain because the manuscripts you receive are on subjects closely related to your own interests, and frequently you are well acquainted with the author. Subjective comments on the significance of valid contributions are inappropriate.

2. *Accuracy*—Reviewers are not expected to verify the accuracy of all their impressions with regard to points that appear questionable in manuscripts. A good procedure to follow is to verify the points that take little time. If you are not sure of your understanding, do not hesitate to comment on the point in question, but write your comment in such a way as to reflect uncertainty.

3. *Relevance*—Confine your comments to an evaluation of the subject matter in the manuscript. Do not criticize the manuscript for lack of subject matter that you think should be present except as the latter is essential for establishment of the points that are covered.

4. *Thoroughness*—Reviewers are frequently criticized, with good reason, for submitting derogatory comments based on superficial reading and inadequate understanding. Inclusion of such comments tends to discredit the entire review. To aid in preparation of your comments, study the entire manuscript intensively to obtain a good understanding of the subject matter.

5. *Explicitness*—Your comments should be explicit. For example, if you think the organization is poor, your comments will be most valuable if you explain why.

6. *Helpfulness*—Your comments should help the author publish work of high quality. If, in your opinion, the manuscript is deficient in one or more aspects of quality, you should write your review comments with the objective of helping the author to eliminate the deficiencies. If, in your opinion, the scientific content could not be brought to a high quality regardless of the excellence of other aspects of the presentation, you will be of service to the author by advising that such is the case.

7. *Courtesy*—Reviewers sometimes take advantage of their anonymity to make discourteous and sarcastic comments. A good test is to prepare comments as if you were asked to sign them.

8. *Promptness*—Reviewers sometimes keep manuscripts a long time without reviewing them. This practice is a form of discourtesy. If you cannot complete your review and return the manuscript to the associate editor within 3 weeks, return the manuscript immediately without review so that the associate editor can send it to another reviewer.