

ICES JOURNAL OF MARINE SCIENCE

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

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The *ICES Journal of Marine Science* (ICES JMS) publishes original articles, opinion essays (“Food for Thought”), visions for the future (“Quo Vadimus”), “Stories from the Front Lines” and critical reviews that contribute to our scientific understanding of marine systems and the impact of human activities on them. Our article types are described [here](#). The *Journal* also serves as a foundation for scientific advice across the broad spectrum of management and conservation issues related to the marine environment. Oceanography (e.g. productivity-determining processes), marine habitats, living resources, and related topics constitute the key elements of papers considered for publication. This includes economic, social, and public administration studies, to the extent that they are directly related to management of the seas and are of general interest to marine scientists. Integrated studies that bridge gaps between traditional disciplines are particularly welcome. You can read the *Journal's* mission statement [here](#) and our “How to get published” guidelines for authors [here](#).

Quality peer reviews are essential for ensuring a high standard of material in scholarly journals, and your evaluation will, therefore, play a major role in our decision as to whether to accept a manuscript for publication. As a context for your assessment, keep in mind that the ICES JMS seeks to publish only the highest quality articles – our current acceptance rate is 30%; 50% of submissions are not pursued through review.

All manuscripts that are distributed for review have been screened by our editors. Therefore, if you receive a manuscript from us to review you can assume that it is “in scope”.

When evaluating a manuscript, you need to satisfy yourself, *inter alia*, that:

- the manuscript presents a substantial piece of work – this means that it is based upon a strong set of data (e.g. a long time-series with above- average spatial and temporal sampling), sampling program, or experiment;
- the paper makes an original contribution to knowledge; e.g. by way of new data, techniques or ideas and is not only confirmatory of previous work;
- the contribution goes beyond being species or region specific;
- the title and abstract clearly reflect the contents of the paper. Note that the Journal strongly prefers titles that are declarative and inform the reader of the content-outcome vs. those that ask an open question;
- the introduction properly places the work in the context of existing knowledge, giving due recognition to previously published work;
- the methodology (including sampling, experimental design, and theory) is presented clearly and thoroughly and is scientifically and

- technically sound;
- the results are presented clearly and concisely, and the text, tables, and figures are mutually consistent, sufficient (but not excessive), and clear;
- consider whether any parts of the manuscript could be presented as supplemental material;
- the interpretations and conclusions follow from the evidence and alternative interpretations are presented in a balanced manner;
- there are specialized parts (e.g. mathematics/statistics) on which someone else needs to comment (if so, please suggest who);
- the references cited are appropriate in terms of number and the precedents selected to support the arguments. If recommending articles that you think that the authors should cite, particularly a large number of those that you have authored, be aware of the Council of Science Editors guidelines about citation manipulation (specifically, coercion) – you will find them [here](#).
- finally, please make a clear overall recommendation to the editor about the suitability of the work for publication in the *ICES Journal of Marine Science*.
 - as it stands or with minor (i.e., cosmetic) revision;
 - only if modified substantially (i.e., additional data; additional or different analysis; modified interpretations or conclusions...) along the lines proposed;
 - as a greatly distilled short communication;
 - as a “Food for Thought”, “Quo Vadmus” or “Stories from the Front Lines” essay rather than a research article (for example, if the hypothesis proposed is reasonable and provocative but not yet well-founded);
 - not at all.

A good review is a creative document that assists the authors to improve and strengthen their contribution. Therefore, in addition to identifying shortcomings, it needs to provide constructive guidance to the author for improving the work and its presentation. Comments in reviews should be made in an impersonal, professional and constructive manner, even if the paper is not deemed suitable for publication. Harshly-worded comments reduce the effectiveness of a review and diminish the stature of the journal. For general guidance on the roles and responsibilities of reviewers, see the Council of Science Editors recommendations, [here](#), and the Committee on Publications Ethics recommendations, [here](#).

Publication style and format should not influence the decision other than as a generic comment, e.g. the grammar of the text needs attention. It is also helpful to both author and editors if the strong points of the paper as well as its weak ones are highlighted. Note that a positive evaluation without a clear and substantive explanation of the rationale for that support does not aid editors in making a final evaluation of the worthiness of the work for publication.

Some reviewers prefer to return manuscripts in electronic form, with recommendations and comments made in “Track Changes” mode. However, please note that such files can contain personal information such as your name and organization. To remove this: (i) on the Tools menu, click Options, then

click the Security tab; (ii) select the Remove personal information from file properties on save check box, and (iii) Save the document.

The Scholar One manuscript processing software allows reviewers to make general comments as well as detailed comments (both of which are made available to the author, and to the other reviewers (in blind copy). Recommendations and comments to the editor alone are also possible (not passed on to the author). Please make use of this when submitting your review.

Note that unpublished manuscripts are the intellectual property of the authors or their employers, meaning that confidentiality should be respected throughout the review process.

You may append your name to your review if you wish, but if you choose to remain anonymous, avoid comments to the authors that might serve as clues to your identity. Unless you indicate otherwise, we will assume that you wish to remain anonymous.

We appreciate your willingness to provide your expertise to the authors and the *ICES Journal of Marine Science*. In that regard, and in an attempt to increase the visibility of the quality control process in science, we would be pleased to send a letter to your Department Head, and/or administrator, recognizing your assistance in this essential task. If you would like us to do this, please send your request, including the name and contact information of the person to whom you would like the letter sent, to Lynsey Rowland at the ICES JMS editorial office (ices.editorialoffice@oup.com).