The Vadose Zone Journal is now accepting a new type of manuscript called “Priority Communications.” These manuscripts are intended to highlight time-sensitive research results that have far-reaching impacts across the vadose zone community. These manuscripts will undergo the same rigorous peer-review process as any other submittal, but the process will be accelerated, with a goal of on-line access within 32 days of original submission. Examples of manuscripts could include results derived from NSF RAPID grant, manuscripts related to recently available data (e.g., impact of extreme climate event on vadose zone processes), a new technique that allows better ways of calculating fluxes in soil, etc. All requests will be determined by the editor of VZJ, and will be managed by the co-editors and associate editors, with a goal of a 2-week review turnaround (~20 days from submission). If review comments are not “accept as is” or “accept with minor revision,” then the paper is released to the authors or converted to a standard article or technical note at the discretion of the editor. We anticipate that the number of Priority Communications manuscripts will be limited to no more than one per month. All “Priority Communications” will be highlighted by SSSA through social media, press releases, or similar tools.

Elements of this new type of VZJ publication

1. Relevant topics for this section would meet one or more of the following criteria
   - New results in a rapidly growing field of research
   - New results that will likely have an impact to a large number of on-going studies
   - Important groundbreaking results of interest to broad community

2. Length and writing style
   - Manuscripts must be concise (no longer than four published pages)
   - Manuscripts must be written in language that is easily accessible to a wider audience

3. Workflow process
   - Authors request consideration by
     - checking appropriate paper type box on the submission website
     - providing short written justification for why the paper should be considered as a priority communication
     - agreeing to return minor revision rapidly or accept release
     - agreeing to cover costs for Open Access to improve distribution to readers
   - Editor decides whether the paper meets the criteria
   - Editor secures a co-Editor AE who are willing to handle the manuscript in the accelerated process (1-2 additional reviewers could be used for rapid review)
   - Editor notifies author (above three steps done in 5 days from submission)
   - Review process is completed and decision sent to the authors 20 days from submission
   - Authors respond to comments rapidly (5 days from receipt of comments)
   - Editor assesses response within 5 days of returned manuscript
   - If accepted, manuscript is assigned a doi number and is posted online (2 days)
   - Manuscript is copyedited, formatted professionally, and posted online (14 days from date of upload of accepted manuscript)

It is our goal that manuscripts fitting “Priority Communication” status be posted online within 32 days of submission. Copy-edited final manuscript would appear within a few weeks after that (~6 weeks from submission).