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Authors: Bandala, Erick R, Rodrigo-Comino, Jesus, and Latif, Mohd Talib

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2021: The New Normal and the Air, Soil and Water Research Perspective

Erick R Bandala¹ , Jesus Rodrigo-Comino^{2,3} 
and Mohd Talib Latif⁴

¹Division of Hydrologic Sciences, Desert Research Institute, Las Vegas, NV, USA. ²Soil Erosion and Degradation Research Group, Department of Geography, Valencia University, Valencia, Spain.

³Department of Physical Geography, University of Trier, Trier, Germany. ⁴Department of Earth Science and Environment, Faculty of Science and Technology, University Kebangsaan, Bangi, Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT: With over 64.1 million cases worldwide (by December 1, 2020) and a death toll surpassing 1.48 million the COVID-19 pandemics has filled not only with fear and isolation our day-to-day lives but also with a significant amount of disinformation, the unreliability of data, and lack of trust on the response of governmental officers and authorities that, sadly, can be translated in loss of lives in our closest circles (colleagues, friends, family). At *Air, Soil and Water Research* (ASW), we believe that knowledge is the only way out of this and any other crisis faced by humankind, and our team has been working elbow-to-elbow (but online) to offer the best quality research and scientific knowledge that will certainly assist for better decision making and led towards the best path to get us through this so hard time.

KEYWORDS: Editorial page, ASW, 2021

AIMS AND SCOPE: This is the editorial page for ASW and aims to stating the view of the editors on the role of the journal on knowledge dissemination.

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: Erick R Bandala, Desert Research Institute, 755 East Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV 89119, USA. Email: Erick.Bandala@dri.edu

In January 2020, the United Nations Foundation (UNF) published their view of the five Global Issues to watch in 2020 including accelerated climate change, timeline remaining to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), inequality and exclusion, conflict, peace, and humanitarian response, and the need for a united world after 75 years of United Nations. At the time, their view was published, none of us could imagine that all these challenges will become overwhelmingly surpassed by an unexpected crisis that has occupied our minds during most of 2020. With over 64.1 million cases worldwide (by December 1, 2020) and a death toll surpassing 1.48 million the COVID-19 pandemics has filled not only with fear and isolation our day-to-day lives but also with a significant amount of disinformation, the unreliability of data, and lack of trust on the response of governmental officers and authorities that, sadly, can be translated in loss of lives in our closest circles (colleagues, friends, family).

At *Air, Soil and Water Research* (ASW), we believe that knowledge is the only way out of this and any other crisis faced by humankind, and our team has been working elbow-to-elbow (but online) to offer the best quality research and scientific knowledge that will certainly assist for better decision making and led towards the best path to get us through this so hard time. During 2020, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemics, we duplicate the total amount of manuscript submission and our acceptance rate reached almost 50%. We have continued receiving manuscript from diverse regions and, as always, our goal is to continue raising the

number of submissions as well as the geographic regions of the authors. Among the wide variety of topics covered by ASW during 2020, most of them have been devoted precisely to deal with some of the Global Issues highlighted by UNF earlier this year by assessing the impact and uptake of heavy metals,^{1,2} climate change effects and adaptations,^{3,4} the use of novel materials and processes for water treatment,^{5–8} social values perception of restoration economy,⁹ plastic debris,¹⁰ soil erosion, management practices and human health,^{11–13} PM10 concentration,¹⁴ indoor environments,¹⁵ and riparian restoration.^{16–20}

Also, we are happy to share with the readers the first collaborative review paper written for twenty editors belonging to the soil section to highlight the challenges that soil scientists have to face in this new era from a transdisciplinary overview of relevant topics.²¹ In this review, we also consider the relevance of micro-plastics as an emerging potential pollutant with the potential to negatively affect the world's soils, and now are even more important due to the residues of face masks (produced from polymers) used during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is almost certain that history will see 2020 as an inflexion point for life before and after COVID-19 pandemic, and that 'new normal' life must go on. We would like to propose using scientific knowledge as the exchange currency for this new normal instead of policy-driven, gut feeling-driven, conspiracy theory-driven decision making. To achieve this goal, the continued support of scientist, researchers, and authors is needed to generate the knowledge as well as expert reviewers working together with editors, associated editors, managing editors, and editorial board members to maintain ASW as the forum where new ideas



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are discussed and spread. Our team is ready, set, and just waiting for your go! signal to re-start our efforts for this 2021, and we invite you to join us as an author, or guest editor to make it possible. As always, we look forward to working with you in making your research available to the broadest possible audience.

ORCID iDs

Erick R Bandala  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9553-1581>

Jesus Rodrigo-Comino  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4823-0871>

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