SECTION 1:
STREAM ASSESSMENTS

1.0 STREAM ASSESSMENTS - OVERVIEW

The procedure outlined in this section assigns a score to the assessment reach based on the evaluation of five broad stream condition categories - **Channel Condition**, **Riparian Buffer**, **In-Stream Habitat**, **Benthic Condition**, and **Channel Alteration**. The score for the individual assessment reach is based on a scale that ranges from 0 to 6. These values are unitless and, as such, are referred to as *indices (*or in singular, an *index).* Therefore, the assessment reach score is referred to as the **Reach Condition Index, RCI**.

The first step in performing an assessment is to decide on the limits of the assessment reach - details of this procedure are presented on page 9. The next step is to determine whether the channel is man-made or natural. For man-made, hard-lined channels, the RCI is easily determined by identifying the type of lining and selecting the associated RCI as presented in Section 1.1 (page 3). For natural or naturalized man-made channels, the RCI is determined by first selecting the descriptive *Condition Parameter* within each of the five condition categories that best describes the condition of the assessment reach (Section 1.2). The *Condition Parameters* are detailed below in Table 1-1:

Table 1-1: Field Guide - Condition Parameters

Channel Condition	Riparian Buffer	In-Stream Habitat	Benthic Condition	Channel Alteration
Severe	Poor	Poor	Poor	Severe
Poor	Marginal			Marginal
Marginal		Marginal	Fair	
Suboptimal	Suboptimal			Minor
Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Good	Negligible / None

Once the *Condition Parameter* for each category has been selected, the associated RCI value is then easily determined by referring to the flowcharts on pages 48-67 that depict the various combinations of *Condition Parameters* that may exist for any given reach.

Form 1.1, Stream Assessment Field Form, is provided on page 11 for recording the condition parameter and resulting RCI for an individual assessment. Form 1.2, Summary of Stream Assessments, is provided on page 13 for summarizing the results of multiple assessments.

A step-wise summary of the stream assessment procedure is presented on page 8.