SECTION 1: STREAM ASSESSMENTS

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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:

Channel Rinarian In-Stream Benthic Channel Condition Buffer Habitat Condition Alteration Poor Severe Poor Poor Severe Poor Marginal Marginal Marginal Marginal Fair Suboptimal Minor Suboptimal **Optimal Optimal Optimal** Good Negligible /

Table 1-1: Field Guide - Condition Parameters

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, <u>Stream Assessment Field Form</u>, is provided on page 11 for recording the condition parameter and resulting RCI for an individual assessment. Form 1.2, <u>Summary of Stream Assessments</u>, 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.

Version 1.3