## 9. TERMINOLOGY

A number of key concepts applicable in water quality and aquatic ecosystems management are described in previous sections of this document. Additional terms are presented below; either for background purposes or to provide further clarification.

*biodiversity* is the "variety and variability amongst living organisms and the ecological complexes in which they occur" (OTA, 1987, as quoted by Angermeier and Karr, 1994).

an *ecosystem* is a dynamic changing entity. Essentially, it includes the diversity, distribution, abundance, and activity, of life in a region, as well as the interaction between these and other physical components (Kevan 1995).

*ecosystem health* can be compared to human health in that a decrease in health can be quantified in terms of indicators, or symptoms, such as reduced species diversity, shortened food-chain length, reduced population stability etc. (Roux *et al*, 1993).

The term *aquatic ecosystem* has been defined in the South African context as "water that is used as a medium for habitation by aquatic organisms and for aquatic processes, as a source of drinking water for wildlife and as a source for water for maintaining riparian biota and processes." (DWAF, 1995)

the *pristine* condition of an ecosystem can be defined as that existing at a point or area with minimal impact from human activities, such as point or non-point source pollution, altered flow regimes, riparian zone alteration, etc.

riparian zone is the area adjacent to a river or stream with a high density, diversity and productivity of plant and animal species relative to nearby uplands (EPA, 1994).