

7. Conclusions and further development

The geomorphological index as presented in this report represents a first attempt to derive a simple method of assessing the geomorphological condition of a river channel. The index has been continuously modified through a relatively limited period of testing by a limited group of people (see for example Cobern, 1998). It needs to be more widely tested in a range of rivers by a number of evaluators. Feedback from these trials will inevitably result in some further modification. The scoring system will also need to be refined as the data base is developed.

Training of evaluators is seen to be an essential part of the programme and effective training methods still need to be developed. It is hoped that this field manual will assist in the identification and classification of geomorphological features and assessment of their condition. This manual includes illustrations of selected examples of the different features. A CD which includes a much wider range of illustrative examples is in the process of development. Field research on the geomorphology of South African rivers is still in its infancy so that data on the physical characteristics of South African rivers are limited. The River Health Programme should go a long way towards building up a data base on the physical form and condition of our rivers. This data base will be invaluable in aiding the interpretation of observed river changes with respect to natural disturbance versus anthropogenic change.