

There is a widely held belief that, over the last few decades, many rivers and wetlands have been significantly degraded. Clearly, groundwater abstraction has had a detrimental effect. However, other pressures such as channelisation, sedimentation, reduced rainfall, poor site management or land-use change can be contributing factors. Various policy responses are reviewed and some examples are given. It is concluded that, whilst groundwater abstraction does cause river and wetland degradation, the degree of degradation often depends upon the individual perspective; therefore a rigorous approach is required in quantifying such degradation and its actual causes, beginning with the establishment of clear objectives and the collection of appropriate data.