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# Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and  
Vulnerability Assessment for  
Pacific Energy West McArthur River  
Unit Camp

Public Drinking Water System,  
Beluga, Alaska

PWSID # 249988.001

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION REPORT 1742

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

January, 2009

Source Water Assessment for  
Pacific Energy West McArthur River  
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The Drinking Water Protection (DWP) section of the Drinking Water Program is producing Source Water Assessments in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996. Each assessment includes a delineation of the source water area, an inventory of potential and existing contaminant sources that may impact the water, a risk ranking for each of these contaminants, and an evaluation of the potential vulnerability of these drinking water sources.

These assessments are intended to provide public water systems owners/operators, communities, and local governments with the best available information that may be used to protect the quality of their drinking water. The assessments combine information obtained from various sources, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), public water system owners/operators, and other public information sources. The results of this assessment are subject to change if additional data becomes available. It is anticipated this assessment will be updated every five years to reflect any changes in the vulnerability and/or susceptibility of public drinking water source. If you have any additional information that may affect the results of this assessment, please contact the DWP staff at the following toll-free number 1-866-956-7656.

January, 2009

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# Source Water Assessment for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp Source of Public Drinking Water, Beluga, Alaska

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## Drinking Water Protection Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public water system for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well located on the west coast of Cook Inlet, near Trading Bay, Alaska. The wellhead received a susceptibility rating of **Low** and the aquifer received a susceptibility rating of **Low**. Combining these two ratings produces a **Low** rating for the natural susceptibility of the well. Identified potential and existing sources of contaminants for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp public drinking water source include: an assumed septic system; an assumed residential heating oil tank; and a road. These identified potential and existing sources of contamination are considered as sources of bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites, and volatile organic chemicals. Overall, the public water sources for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp received a vulnerability rating of **Medium** for bacteria and viruses, **Low** for nitrates and nitrites, and **Low** for volatile organic chemicals. This assessment of contaminant risks can be used as a foundation for local voluntary protection efforts as well as a basis for the continuous efforts on the part of Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp to protect public health.

### PACIFIC ENERGY WEST MCARTHUR RIVER UNIT CAMP PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

The Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp public water system is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well located near Trading Bay, Alaska (see Map A in Appendix A). Trading Bay is on the west coast of Cook Inlet, almost due west of Nikiski, across from the Kenai Peninsula. It lies within the boundaries of the Kenai Peninsula Borough, which has a population of approximately 50,000 and encompasses an area of more than 25,600 square miles (KPB, 2008).

The area receives 23 inches of precipitation annually, 80 inches of which comes as snowfall. Average temperatures range from 4 to 22 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and from 46 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer (ADCCED, 2008).

The area is very sparsely populated, with very little development along the coast. There are very few

residences in the area, and those present rely on private wells and septic systems (ADCCED, 2008).

According to the well log (06/20/2001), the Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp well extends approximately 265 feet below the ground surface and is completed in a confined aquifer.

This system operates year-round and serves between ten and seventy-five non-residents through two service connections.

### PACIFIC ENERGY WEST MCARTHUR RIVER UNIT CAMP DRINKING WATER PROTECTION AREA

In order to evaluate whether a drinking water source is at risk, we must first evaluate what are the most likely pathways for surface contamination to reach the groundwater. These areas are determined by looking at the characteristics of the soil, groundwater, aquifer, and well.

The most probable area for contamination to reach the drinking water well is the drinking water protection area. The drinking water protection area is the area circling the well (the area influenced by pumping) and also the area upgradient of the well, usually forming a parabola shape. Because releases of contaminants within the protection area are most likely to impact the well, this area will serve as the focus for voluntary protection efforts.

There are many different methods for calculating the size of protection areas. Drinking Water Protection (DWP) uses a combination of two simple groundwater flow equations, the Thiem and uniform flow equations for all groundwater wells screened in unconsolidated material. The orientation of the protection zone is then drawn using a water table elevation map (if available) or a land surface elevation map of the area. The protection zone calculated by DWP is an estimate using the available information and resources, and may differ slightly from the actual capture zone. Because of uncertainties and changing site conditions, a factor of safety is added to the protection zone to form the drinking water protection area for the well.

The parameters used to calculate the shape of this protection zone are general for the whole alluvial plain and were obtained from various United States Geological Survey (USGS) reports, area well logs, and

the Groundwater textbook by Freeze and Cherry (Freeze and Cherry, 1979).

The protection areas established for wells by the DEC are usually separated into two zones, limited by the watershed. These zones correspond to differences in the time-of-travel (TOT) of the water moving through the aquifer to the well. An analytical calculation was used to determine the size and shape of the protection area.

The time-of-travel for contaminants within the water varies and is dependent on the physical and chemical characteristics of each contaminant. The following is a summary of the two protection area zones for wells and the calculated time-of-travel for each:

**Table 1. Definition of Zones**

Zone	Definition
A	Several months time-of-travel
B	Less than the 2 year time-of-travel

The drinking water protection area for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp was determined using an analytical calculation and includes Zones A and B (see Map A in Appendix A).

**INVENTORY OF POTENTIAL AND EXISTING CONTAMINANT SOURCES**

DWP has completed an inventory of potential and existing sources of contamination within the Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp drinking water protection area. This inventory was completed through a search of agency records and other publicly available information. Potential sources of contamination to the drinking water aquifer include a wide range of categories and types. Potential drinking water contaminants are found within agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial areas, but can also occur within areas that have little or no development.

For the basis of all Class B public water system assessments, the following three categories of drinking water contaminants were inventoried:

- Bacteria and viruses;
- Nitrates and/or nitrites;
- Volatile organic chemicals

The sources are displayed on Map C of Appendix C and summarized in Table 1 of Appendix B.

**RANKING OF CONTAMINANT RISKS**

Once the potential and existing sources of contamination have been identified, they are assigned a ranking according to what type and level of risk they represent. Ranking of contaminant risks for a

“potential” or “existing” source of contamination is a function of toxicity and volumes of specific contaminants associated with that source. Rankings include:

- Low;
- Medium;
- High; and
- Very High.

Tables 2 through 4 in Appendix B contain the ranking of potential and existing sources of contamination with respect to bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites, and volatile organic chemicals.

**VULNERABILITY OF PACIFIC ENERGY WEST MCARTHUR RIVER UNIT CAMP DRINKING WATER SYSTEM**

Vulnerability of a drinking water source to contamination is a combination of two factors:

- Natural Susceptibility; and
- Contaminant Risks.

A score for the Natural Susceptibility of the well is reached by considering the properties of the well and the aquifer.

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{Susceptibility of the Wellhead (0-25 Points)} \\
 &\quad + \\
 &\quad \text{Susceptibility of the Aquifer (0-25 Points)} \\
 &\quad = \\
 &\quad \text{Natural Susceptibility of the Well (0-50 Points)}
 \end{aligned}$$

A ranking is assigned for the Natural Susceptibility according to the point score:

Natural Susceptibility Ratings	
40-50 pts	Very High
30 to < 40 pts	High
20 to < 30 pts	Medium
< 20 pts	Low

Factors contributing to the susceptibility of the wellhead are: whether the sanitary seal is in place, protection from flooding, and if the well casing is properly grouted.

The wellhead for the Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp received a **Low** susceptibility rating. The most recent sanitary survey (04/03/2002) indicates that a sanitary seal is installed on the well, the land surface is sloped away from the well, and the well is grouted according to DEC regulations. Sanitary seals prevent potential contaminants from entering the well, while sloping of the land surface away from the wellhead provides adequate surface water drainage, and

concrete or grouting around the wellhead helps to prevent potential contaminants from traveling down the outside of the well casing.

Factors contributing to the susceptibility of the aquifer are: whether the aquifer is confined or unconfined, whether the well is completed in unconsolidated or fractured bedrock, whether wells and bore holes are penetrating the aquifer and, if applicable, the depth and thickness of the confining layer.

The Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp system draws water from a confined aquifer that is overlain by a 65-foot thick layer of grey clay. The well received a **Low** susceptibility rating because of its deep nature and thick confining layer. Deeper aquifers are more protected from surface contaminants while thicker confining layers provide greater protection from contaminants traveling down the aquifer with precipitation and runoff.

Table 2 summarizes the Susceptibility scores and ratings for the Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp system.

**Table 2. Susceptibility**

	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	0	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	6	Low
Natural Susceptibility	6	Low

Contaminant risks are derived from an evaluation of the routine sampling results of the water system and the presence of potential sources of contamination. Contaminant risks to a drinking water source depend on the type and distribution of contaminant sources. Flow charts are used to assign a point score, and ratings are assigned in the same way as for the natural susceptibility:

<b>Contaminant Risk Ratings</b>	
40-50 pts	Very High
30 to < 40 pts	High
20 to < 30 pts	Medium
< 20 pts	Low

Table 3 summarizes the Contaminant Risks for each category of drinking water contaminants for the Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp system.

**Table 3. Contaminant Risks**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Bacteria and Viruses	50	Very High
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	14	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	25	Medium

Finally, an overall vulnerability score is assigned for each water system by combining each of the contaminant risk scores with the natural susceptibility score:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{Natural Susceptibility (0-50 Points)} \\
 &+ \\
 &\text{Contaminant Risks (0-50 Points)} \\
 &= \\
 &\text{Vulnerability of the Drinking Water Source to} \\
 &\text{Contamination (0-100 Points)}
 \end{aligned}$$

Again, rankings are assigned according to a point score:

<b>Overall Vulnerability Ratings</b>	
80-100 pts	Very High
60 to < 80 pts	High
40 to < 60 pts	Medium
< 40 pts	Low

Table 4 contains the overall vulnerability scores (0-100) and ratings for each of the three categories of drinking water contaminants for the Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp system. Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five.

**Table 4. Overall Vulnerability**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Bacteria and Viruses	55	Medium
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	20	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	30	Low

**Bacteria and Viruses**

The contaminant risk to the drinking water well for bacteria and viruses is determined to be **Very High**, with an assumed septic system and a road contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

Coliforms (a bacteria) are found naturally in the environment and while not necessarily a direct health threat, they are an indicator of other potentially harmful bacteria in the water, more specifically fecal coliforms and E. coli. These bacteria only come from human and animal fecal waste and can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, and other symptoms (EPA, 2008).

Only a small number of bacteria and viruses are required to endanger public health. Positive samples for bacteria and viruses increase the overall vulnerability of the drinking water source, indicating that the source is susceptible to bacteria and virus contamination.

The sampling history at Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp reveals repeated positive results for bacteria and viruses within the past 5 years. Bacteria and viruses have been found in water samples on 04/06/2004, 07/25/2006, 07/31/2006, and 08/16/2006 (data reviewed in April, 2008).

After combining the contaminant risk for bacteria and viruses with the natural susceptibility of the well, the overall vulnerability of the well to contamination is **Medium**.

#### **Nitrates and Nitrites**

The contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp is determined to be **Low**, with an assumed septic system and a road contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The sampling history for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp indicates that nitrates and nitrites have been detected within the last 5 years, with a concentration of 0.40 mg/L detected 04/05/2007 (data reviewed in April, 2008).

After combining the contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites with the natural susceptibility of the well, the overall vulnerability of the well to contamination is **Low**.

#### **Volatile Organic Chemicals**

The contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals is determined to be **Medium**, with an assumed septic system, an assumed heating oil tank and a road contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The drinking water at Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp has not recently been sampled for volatile organic chemicals (data reviewed in April, 2008).

After combining the contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals with the natural susceptibility of the well, the overall vulnerability of the well to contamination is **Low**.

#### **Using the Source Water Assessment**

This assessment of contaminant risks can be used as a foundation for local voluntary protection efforts as well as a basis for the continuous efforts on the part of Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp to protect public health. It is anticipated that Source Water Assessments will be updated every five years to reflect any changes in the vulnerability and/or susceptibility of the Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp drinking water source.

## REFERENCES

Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (ADCCED), Accessed 2008 [WWW document]. URL: [http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF\\_COMDB.htm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_COMDB.htm)

Freeze, R.A. and Cherry, J.A., 1979. Groundwater. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB), Accessed 2008 [WWW document].  
URL: <http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us/>.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Accessed 2008 [WWW document].  
URL: <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/contaminants/index.html>.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp Drinking Water Protection Area Location Map (Map A)**

Public Water Well System for PWS #249988.001 Pacific Energy West Mcarthur River Unit Camp



**Legend**

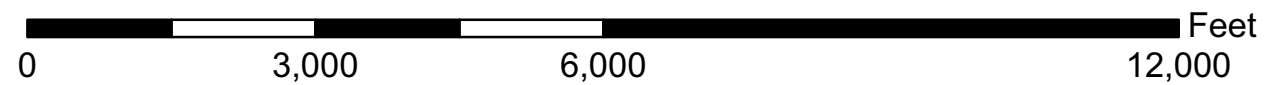
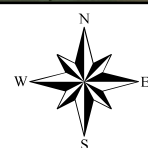
- Class B Public Water System
- Groundwater Protection Zones**
- Zone A Protection Area - Several Months Travel Time
- Zone B Protection Area - 2 Years Travel Time

**Data Sources:**  
 Contaminant Sources, Public Water System Wells, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)

**All other data:**  
 Alaska Statewide Digital Mapping Initiative (SDMI)

Drinking Water Protection Areas based on "Alaska Drinking Water Protection Program - Guidance Manual for Class B Public Water Systems" published by ADEC

URS Corporation does not guarantee the accuracy or validity of the data provided.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Contaminant Source Inventory And Risk Ranking for Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp (Tables 1-4)**

**Table 1**

**Contaminant Source Inventory for  
West McArthur River Unit Camp**

**PWSID 249988.001**

<b>Contaminant Source Type</b>	<b>Contaminant Source ID</b>	<b>CS ID tag</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Map Number</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	C	1 assumed
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	C	1 assumed
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24	B	C	1 road

**Table 2**

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for  
Forest Oil West Mcarthur  
Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

**PWSID 249988.001**

<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	Low	C	1 assumed
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24	B	Low	C	1 road

**Table 3**

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for  
Forest Oil West Mcarthur  
Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

**PWSID 249988.001**

<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	Low	C	1 assumed
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24	B	Low	C	1 road

**Table 4**

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for  
Forest Oil West Mcarthur  
Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals*

*PWSID 249988.001*

<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	Low	C	1 assumed
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	Medium	C	1 assumed
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24	B	Low	C	1 road

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Pacific Energy West McArthur River Unit Camp Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Map C)**



**Public Water Well System for PWS #249988.001 Pacific Energy West Mcarthur River Unit Camp  
Showing Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination**



**Legend**

● Class B Public Water System

**Groundwater Protection Zones**

□ Zone A Protection Area - Several Months Travel Time

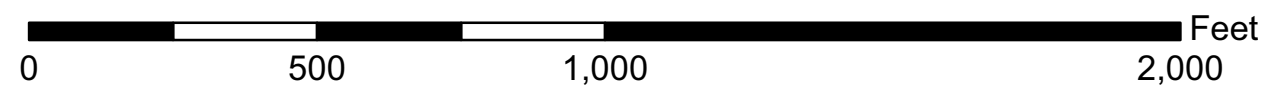
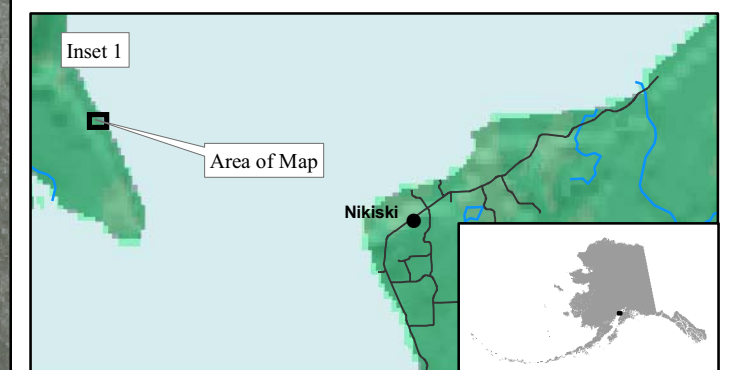
□ Zone B Protection Area - 2 Years Travel Time

**Data Sources:**  
Contaminant Sources, Public Water System Wells, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)

**All other data:**  
Alaska Statewide Digital Mapping Initiative (SDMI)

**Drinking Water Protection Areas based on "Alaska Drinking Water Protection Program - Guidance Manual for Class B Public Water Systems" published by ADEC**

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Pacific Energy West Mcarthur River Unit Camp  
PWS 249988.001

**Appendix C Map C**