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# Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and  
Vulnerability Assessment for  
Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well  
Public Drinking Water System,  
Big Lake, Alaska  
PWSID # 223455.001

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION REPORT 1663

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

January, 2009

Source Water Assessment for  
Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well  
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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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well Source of Public Drinking Water, Big Lake, Alaska

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## Drinking Water Protection Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public water system for Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well located off South Beaver Lake Road in Big Lake, Alaska. The wellhead received a susceptibility rating of **Low** and the aquifer received a susceptibility rating of **Very High**. Combining these two ratings produces a **Medium** rating for the natural susceptibility of the well. Identified potential and current sources of contaminants for Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well public drinking water source include: assumed septic systems, assumed heating oil tanks, roads, and a coal mining area. 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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well received a vulnerability rating of **Low** for bacteria and viruses, **Medium** for nitrates and nitrites, and **High** 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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well to protect public health.

### LITTLE BEAVER CAMP - LOWER WELL PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

The Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well public water system is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well located off South Beaver Lake Road, about 1.5 miles north of Big Lake Road, in Big Lake, Alaska (see Map A in Appendix A). The town of Big Lake lies between the lake of the same name and the Parks Highway, about 12 miles southwest of Wasilla. Big Lake is located within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The area receives 14 inches of rain and 48 inches of snow per year. January temperatures can range from -33 to 33 degrees Fahrenheit, while July temperatures can range from 42 to 83 degrees. The population of Big Lake is 3,166 (ADCCED 2009).

About 85% of homes in Big Lake use water wells and septic systems. The rest of the homes in the area use outhouses and haul water. Enstar provides piped natural

gas to the community and electricity is provided by Matanuska Electric Association (ADCCED 2009).

According to the sanitary survey for this system (01/31/2005), the well extends approximately 113 feet below the ground surface. No well log is available for this system. The well is assumed to be completed in an unconfined aquifer. This system operates continuously and serves up to 180 non-residents through one service connection.

### LITTLE BEAVER CAMP - LOWER WELL 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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well was determined using an analytical calculation and includes Zones A and B (See Map A of Appendix A).

**INVENTORY OF POTENTIAL AND EXISTING CONTAMINANT SOURCES**

DWP has completed an inventory of potential and existing sources of contamination within the Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well 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 LITTLE BEAVER CAMP - LOWER WELL 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.

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

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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well received a **Low** susceptibility rating. The most recent sanitary survey (01/31/2005) indicates the well is capped with a sanitary seal, the land surface is sloped away from the well, and the well is grouted per DEC regulations. Sanitary seals prevent potential contaminant from entering the well while sloping of the land surface and grouting help 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 confining layer.

The Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well system draws water from what is assumed to be an unconfined aquifer. It received a **Very High** susceptibility rating because of its unconfined nature and the presence of other wells penetrating the vadose zone of the protection area. Because an unconfined aquifer is recharged by surface water and precipitation that migrates downward from the surface, it is susceptible to contamination from outside sources. Furthermore, the presence of other wells penetrating the vadose zone of the protection area can allow contaminants to travel into the shared aquifer with precipitation and runoff

Table 2 summarizes the Susceptibility scores and ratings for the Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well system.

**Table 2. Susceptibility**

	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	0	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	25	Very High
Natural Susceptibility	25	Medium

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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well system.

**Table 3. Contaminant Risks**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Bacteria and Viruses	12	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	17	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	50	Very High

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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well 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	35	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	40	Medium
Volatile Organic Chemicals	75	High

**Bacteria and Viruses**

The contaminant risk for bacteria and viruses is **Low** with septic systems and roads contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

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

Only a small amount of bacteria and viruses are required to endanger public health. Positive samples increase the overall vulnerability of the drinking water source, indicating that the source is susceptible to bacteria and virus contamination. Bacteria and viruses have not recently been detected during water sampling of the system at Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well (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 **Low**.

#### **Nitrates and Nitrites**

The contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites is **Low** with septic systems and roads contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The sampling history for the Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well indicates that nitrates have been detected in the water within the last 5 years, with the highest concentration of 0.93 mg/l detected on 11/03/2006, (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 **Medium**.

#### **Volatile Organic Chemicals**

The contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals is **Very High** with septic systems, heating oil tanks, roads, and a coal mining area contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The water system at Little Beaver Camp – Lower Well 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 **High**.

#### **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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well 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 Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well drinking water source.

## REFERENCES

Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (ADCCED), Accessed 2009 [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.

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



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well Drinking Water Protection Area Location Map (Map A)**

Public Water Well System for PWS #223455.001 Little Beaver Camp Lower Well



**Legend**

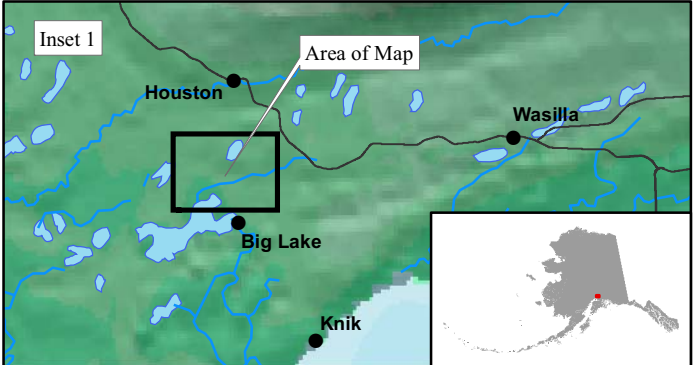
- Class B Public Water System Well
- Groundwater Protection Zones**
- Zone A Protection Area - Several Months Travel Time
- Zone B Protection Area - 2 Years Travel Time

**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.**



Little Beaver Camp Lower Well  
 PWS 223455.001

Appendix A Map A

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well (Tables 1-4)**

**Table 1**

**Contaminant Source Inventory for  
Little Beaver Camp Lower Well**

**PWSID 223455.001**

<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>
Coal mining (active or inactive?)	E01	E01	A	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	C	2 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	C	2 assumed heating oil tanks
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	C	1 road
Coal mining (active or inactive?)	E01	E01	B	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	B	C	21 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	B	C	21 assumed heating oil tanks
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	C	1 road

**Table 2**

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for  
Little Beaver Camp Lower Well  
Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

*PWSID 223455.001*

<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	2 assumed septic systems
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	Low	C	1 road
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	B	Low	C	21 assumed septic systems
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	Low	C	1 road

**Table 3**

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for  
Little Beaver Camp Lower Well  
Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

*PWSID 223455.001*

<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	2 assumed septic systems
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	Low	C	1 road
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	B	Low	C	21 assumed septic systems
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	Low	C	1 road

Table 4

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for  
Little Beaver Camp Lower Well  
Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals*

PWSID 223455.001

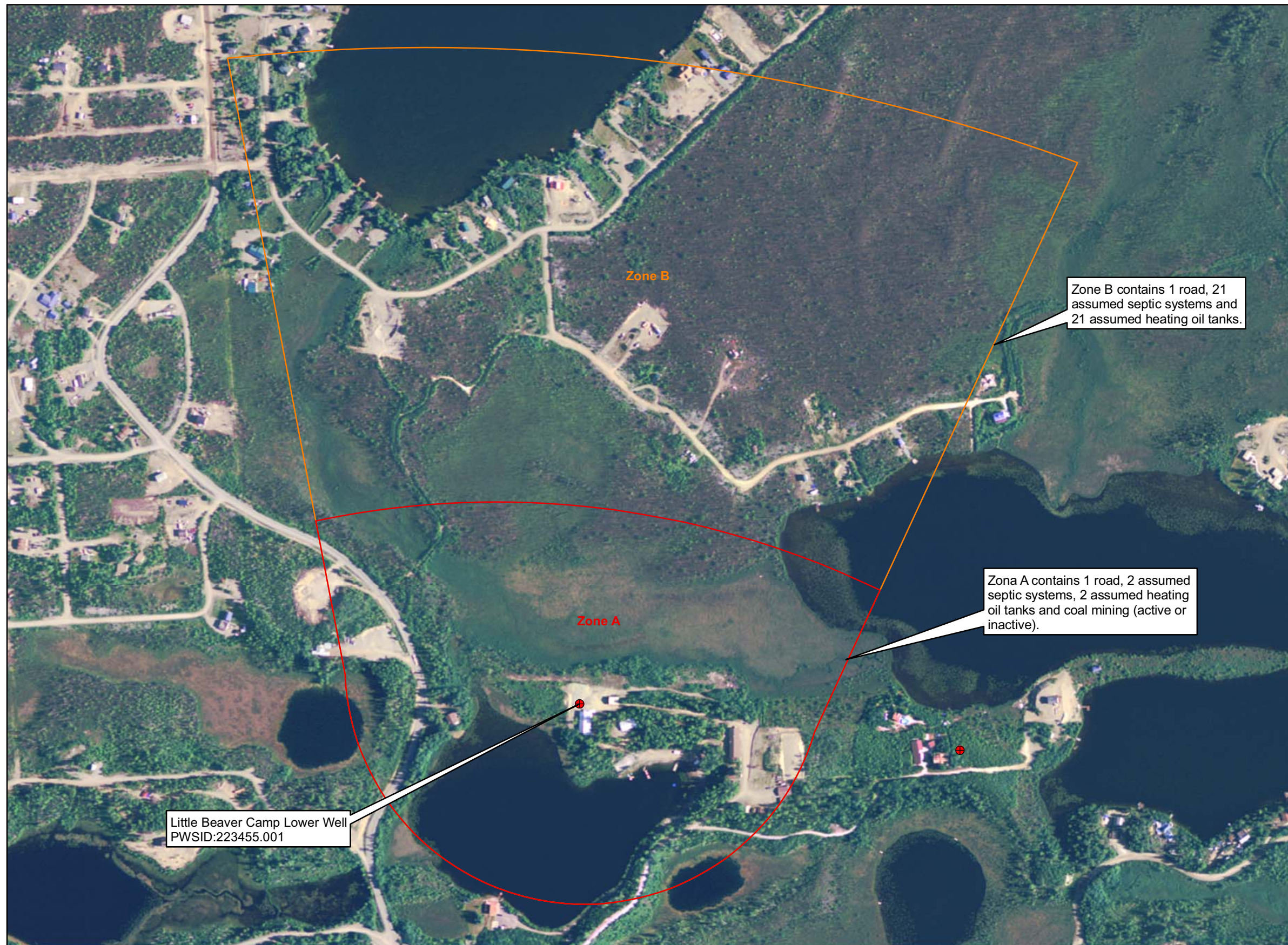
<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Coal mining (active or inactive?)	E01	E01	A	High	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	Low	C	2 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	Medium	C	2 assumed heating oil tanks
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	Low	C	1 road
Coal mining (active or inactive?)	E01	E01	B	High	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	B	Low	C	21 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	B	Medium	C	21 assumed heating oil tanks
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	Low	C	1 road

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Little Beaver Camp - Lower Well Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Map C)**



**Public Water Well System for PWS # 223455.001 Little Beaver Camp Lower Well  
Showing Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination**



**Legend**

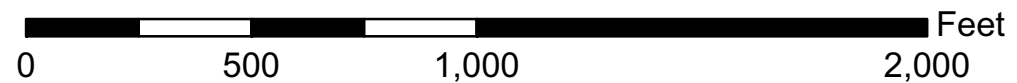
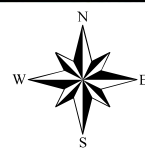
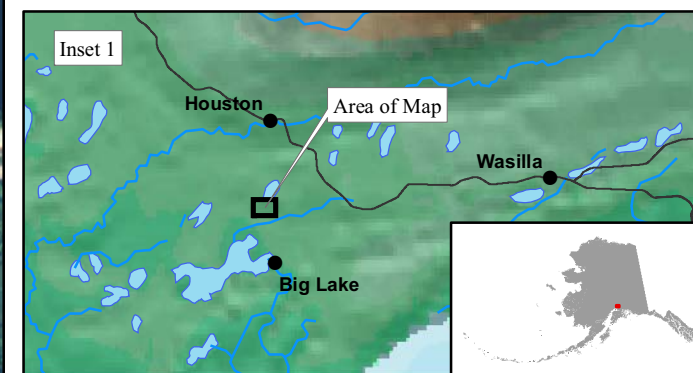
- Class B Public Water System Well
- Groundwater Protection Zones**
- Zone A Protection Area - Several Months Travel Time
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**Drinking Water Protection Areas based on "Alaska Drinking Water Protection Program - Guidance Manual for Class B Public Water Systems" published by ADEC**

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Little Beaver Camp Lower Well  
PWS 223455.001

**Appendix C Map C**