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# Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and  
Vulnerability Assessment for  
Chulitna Campground  
Drinking Water System,  
Chulitna, Alaska

Chulitna Campground # 226923

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT 253  
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

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# Source Water Assessment for Chulitna Campground Source of Public Drinking Water, Chulitna, Alaska

By Shannon & Wilson, Inc.

## Drinking Water Protection Program Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chulitna Campground is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well, north of Talkeetna, Alaska. Identified potential and current sources of contaminants for Chulitna Campground public drinking water source include: nonresidential pit toilets and roads. These identified potential and existing sources of contamination are considered sources of bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites, and volatile organic chemicals. Overall, the public water sources for Chulitna Campground received a vulnerability rating of **Low** for volatile organic chemicals, **Low** for bacteria and viruses, and **Low** for nitrates and nitrites.

### INTRODUCTION

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) is completing source water assessments for all public drinking water sources in the State of Alaska. The purpose of this assessment is to provide owners and/or operators, communities, and local governments with information they can use to preserve the quality of Alaska's public drinking water supplies. The results of this source water assessment can be used to decide where voluntary protection efforts are needed and feasible, and also what efforts will be most effective in reducing contaminant risks to your water system. Shannon & Wilson has been contracted to perform these assessments under the supervision of ADEC.

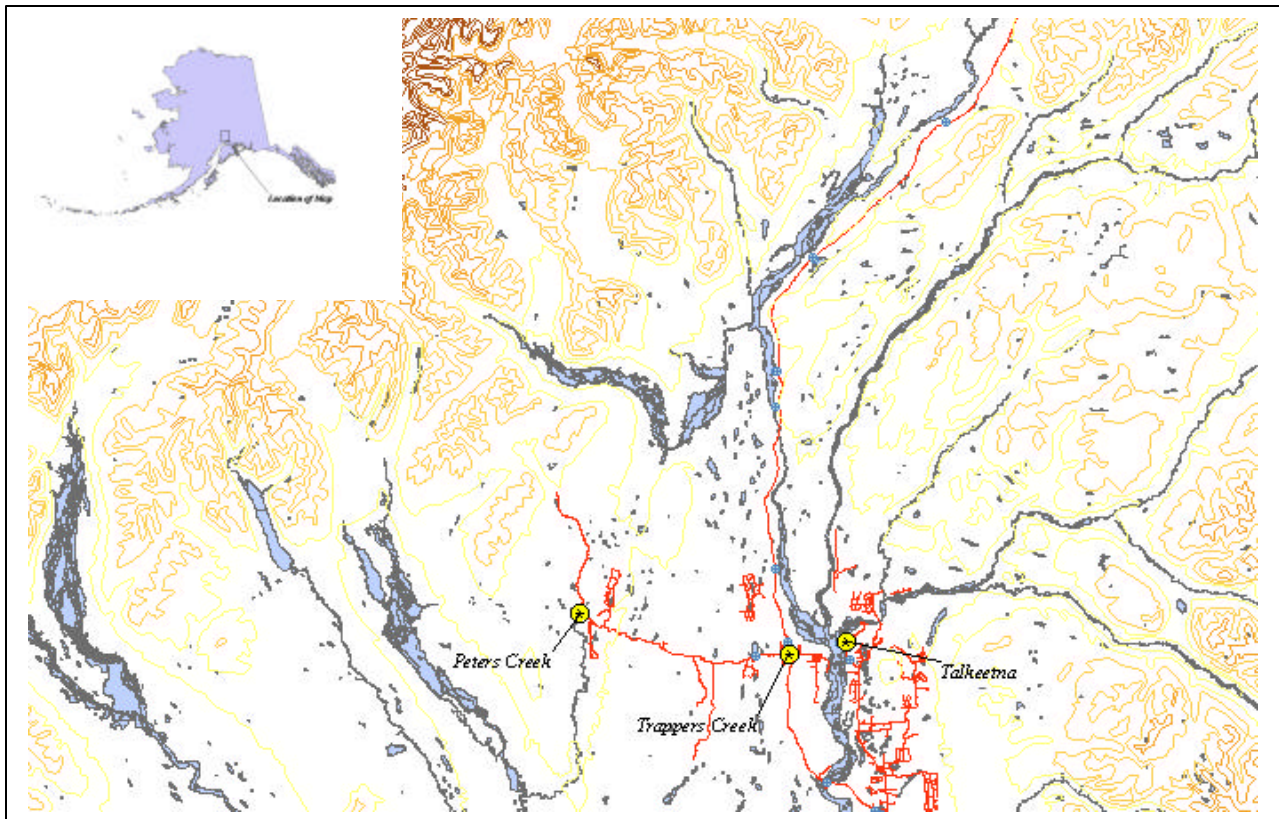


Figure 1. Index map showing the location of the Upper Susitna River Region.

This source water assessment combines a review of the natural conditions at the site and the potential and existing contaminant risks. These are combined to determine the overall vulnerability of the drinking water source to contamination.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE UPPER SUSITNA RIVER REGION**

### **Location**

The Susitna River watershed is the largest watershed in Southcentral Alaska with the community of Talkeetna located at the confluence of the Chulitna, Talkeetna, and Susitna rivers. The area surrounding Talkeetna is shown in Figure 1. Talkeetna is located in the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough.

Glacial and alluvial forces have shaped the Susitna Region surrounding Talkeetna. These forces have resulted in the broad U-shaped river valleys, lakes, streams and undulating ridges and hills. Landforms in and around the Middle Susitna River Region are typified by the broad river floodplains, low ridges and lowlands.

### **Precipitation**

Talkeetna averages about 30 inches of precipitation per year, including about 107 inches of snowfall.

### **Topography and Drainage**

The area topography varies from about 300 feet to 400 feet within the river floodplains to several thousand feet on the surrounding ridges and mountain flanks.

### **Groundwater**

Although the quality can vary significantly in a short distance, groundwater supplies are generally abundant in the area. Many homes and businesses in the area rely on individual wells for their water supply. Most of these wells are shallow with depths of less than 100 feet to 200 feet. Static water levels in many of these wells are less than 15 feet below the surface. The coarse, alluvial, sandy gravel in the floodplains of the areas streams and rivers provides a large aquifer even in the winter when infiltration is low.

### **Geology and Soils**

Most of the soils in the area provide good sources of sand, gravel and topsoil. The deposition of silt, clay and organic muck in old lakes, oxbows and depressions means that some areas have soil conditions that vary over relatively short distances.

## **CHULITNA CAMPGROUND PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM**

Chulitna Campground is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well at Mile 121.6 Parks Highway.

According to the Sanitary Survey dated 8/25/99, the installation date, depth and casing size for the well is unknown. The survey also indicates it is unknown if the well was installed with a cap providing a sanitary seal. A properly installed sanitary seal may provide protection against contaminants from entering the source waters at the well casing. The land surface is appropriately sloped away from the well providing adequate surface water drainage. The well was not grouted according to ADEC regulations. Proper grouting provides added protection against contaminants travelling along the well casing and into source waters.

This system operates year-round and serves no residents and more than 25 non-residents through one service connection.

## **CHULITNA CAMPGROUND 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. Some areas are more likely to allow contamination to reach the well than others. 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 area that contributes water to the well, the groundwater recharge area. This area is designated as the Drinking Water Protection Area (DWPA). Because a release of contaminants within the DWPA are most likely to impact the drinking water well, this area will serve as the focus for voluntary protection efforts.

An analytical calculation was used to determine the size and shape of the DWPA. The input parameters describing the attributes of the aquifer in this calculation were adopted from the U.S. Geological Survey (*Patrick, Brabets, and Glass, 1989*), and State of Alaska Department of Water Resources. Additional methods were also used to take into account any uncertainties in groundwater flow and aquifer characteristics to arrive at a meaningful DWPA (Please refer to the Guidance Manual for Class B Public Water Systems for additional information).

The DWPA's established for wells by the ADEC are separated into four zones. These zones correspond to differences in the time-of-travel (TOT) of the water moving through the aquifer to the well. 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 four DWPA zones and the calculated TOT for each:

**Table 1. Definition of Zones**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Definition</b>
A	¼ the distance for the 2 year TOT
B	Less than the 2 year TOT
C	Less Than the 5 year TOT
D	Less than the 10 year TOT

As an example, water moving through the aquifer in Zone B will reach the well in less than 2 years from the time it crosses the outer limit of Zone B.

Zone A also incorporates the area downgradient from the well to take into account the area of the aquifer that is influenced by pumping of the well. Water within the aquifer in Zone A will reach the well in several hours to several months.

### **INVENTORY OF POTENTIAL AND EXISTING CONTAMINANT SOURCES**

The Drinking Water Protection Program has completed an inventory of potential and existing sources of contamination within the Chulitna Campground DWPA. 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, three categories of drinking water contaminants were inventoried, they include:

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

Inventoried potential sources of contamination within Zones A through Zone D were associated with residential and light industrial type activities. The sources are summarized in the tables in Appendix B.

### **RANKING OF CONTAMINANT RISKS**

Once the potential and existing sources of contamination have been identified, they are sorted and ranked 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. Further, contaminant risks are a function of the number and density of those types of contaminant sources as well as the proximity of those sources to the well.

### **VULNERABILITY OF CHULITNA CAMPGROUND DRINKING WATER SOURCE**

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

- Natural susceptibility; and
- Contaminant risks.

Each of the three categories of drinking water contaminants has been analyzed and an overall vulnerability score of 0 to 100 is ultimately assigned:

Natural Susceptibility (0 – 50 points)

+

Contaminant Risks (0 – 50 points)

=

Vulnerability of the  
Drinking Water Source to Contamination (0 – 100).

A score for the Natural Susceptibility is achieved by analyzing the properties of the well and the aquifer.

Susceptibility of the Wellhead (0 – 25 Points)

+

Susceptibility of the Aquifer (0 – 25 Points)

=

Natural Susceptibility (Susceptibility of the Well)  
(0 – 50 Points)

The well for Chulitna Campground is completed in an unconfined aquifer setting. Because an unconfined aquifer is recharged by surface water and precipitation that migrates downward from the surface, contaminants at the surface have the potential to adversely impact this aquifer. Table 2 shows the Overall Susceptibility score and rating for Chulitna Campground.

**Table 2. Natural Susceptibility - Susceptibility of the Wellhead and Aquifer to Contamination**

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	5	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	14	Medium
Natural Susceptibility	19	Low

Contaminant risks to a drinking water source depend on the type, number or density, and distribution of contaminant sources. This data has been derived from an examination of existing or historical contamination that has been detected at the drinking water source through routine sampling. It also evaluates potential sources of contamination. Table 3 summarizes the Contaminant Risks for each category of drinking water contaminants.

**Table 3. Contaminant Risks**

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	12	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	13	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	12	Low

Appendix D contains eight charts, which together form the ‘Vulnerability Analysis’ for a source water assessment for a public drinking water source. Chart 1 analyzes the ‘Susceptibility of the Wellhead’ to contamination by looking at the construction of the well and its surrounding area. Chart 2 analyzes the ‘Susceptibility of the Aquifer’ to contamination by looking at the naturally-occurring attributes of the water source and influences on the groundwater system that might lead to contamination. Chart 3 analyzes ‘Contaminant Risks’ for the drinking water source with respect to bacteria and viruses. The ‘Contaminant Risks’ portion of the analysis considers potential sources of contaminants as well as a review of contamination that has or may have occurred, but has not arrived or been detected at the well. Lastly, Chart 4 contains the ‘Vulnerability Analysis for Bacteria and Viruses.’ Charts 5 through 8 contain the Contaminant Risks and Vulnerability Analyses for nitrates and nitrites and volatile organic chemicals, respectively.

Table 4 contains the overall vulnerability scores (0 – 10) and ratings for each of the three categories of drinking water contaminants. Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five.

**Table 4. Overall Vulnerability of Chulitna Campground to Contamination by Category**

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	30	Low
Nitrates and Nitrites	30	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	30	Low

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.

The nonresidential pit toilets and roads create a risk increase for the bacteria and viruses, nitrates and nitrites, and volatile organic compounds.

Only a small amount of bacteria and viruses are required to endanger public health. Bacteria and viruses have not been detected during recent water sampling of the system at Chulitna Campground.

Nitrates and/or nitrites are found in natural background concentration at this site, as elsewhere throughout Alaska. Nitrate concentrations in uncontaminated groundwater are typically less than 2 milligrams per liter (mg/L) and are derived primarily from the decomposition of organic matter in soils, adopted from the U.S. Geological Survey (Wang, et al., 2000).

Sampling history for Chulitna Campground well indicates that low concentrations of nitrate have been detected (see Chart 5 - Contaminant Risks for Nitrates and/or Nitrites in Appendix D). The maximum reported existing nitrate concentration is approximately 0.14 mg/L or 1% of the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 10 mg/L. The MCL is the maximum level of contaminant that is allowed to exist in drinking water and still be consumed by humans without harmful health effects. Due to the high solubility and weak retention by soil, nitrates are very mobile, moving at approximately the same rate as water. Though existing nitrate contamination was detected at the site, concentrations remain at very safe levels with respect to human health.

The roads located in Zone A form the greatest risk for volatile organic chemicals.

## SUMMARY

A *Source Water Assessment* has been completed for the sources of public drinking water serving Chulitna Campground. The overall vulnerability of this source to contamination is **Low** for volatile organic chemicals, **Low** for bacteria and viruses, and **Low** for nitrates and nitrites. 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 Chulitna Campground 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 Chulitna Campground public drinking water source.



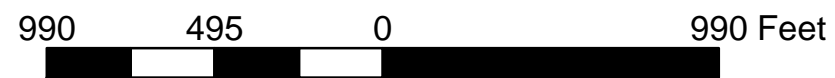
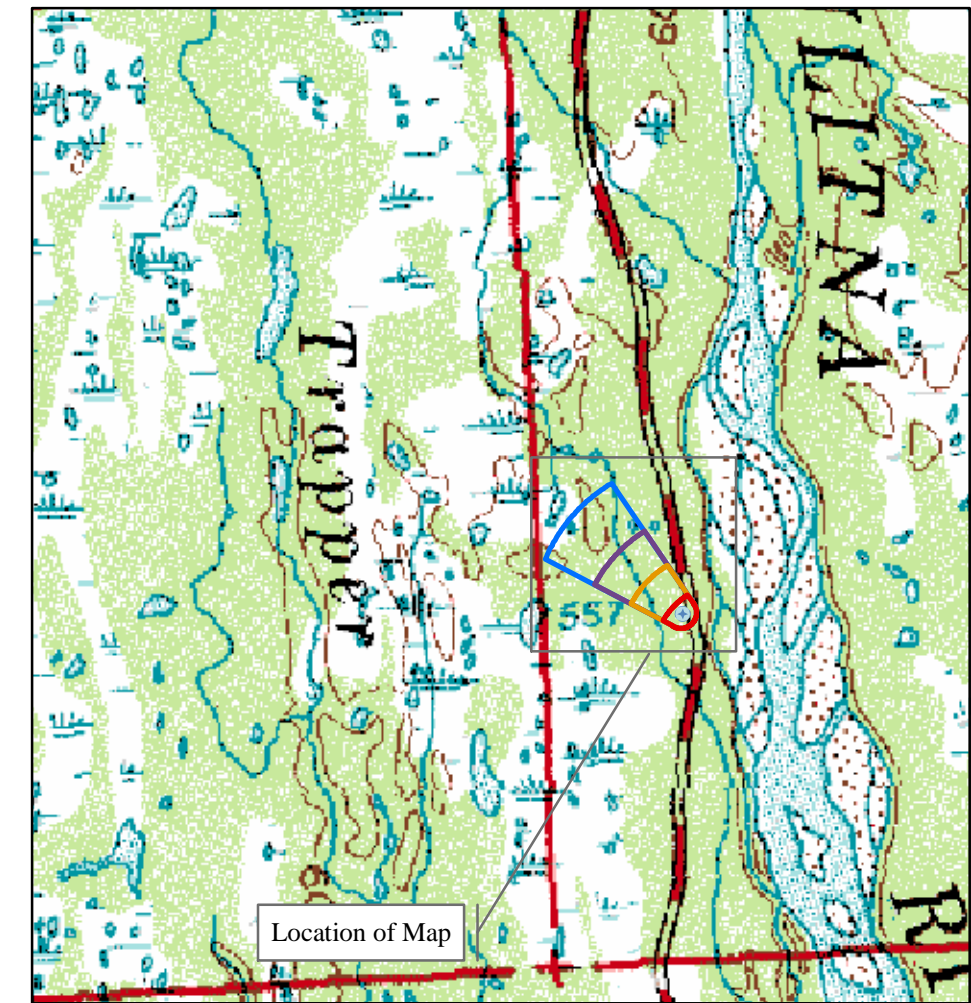
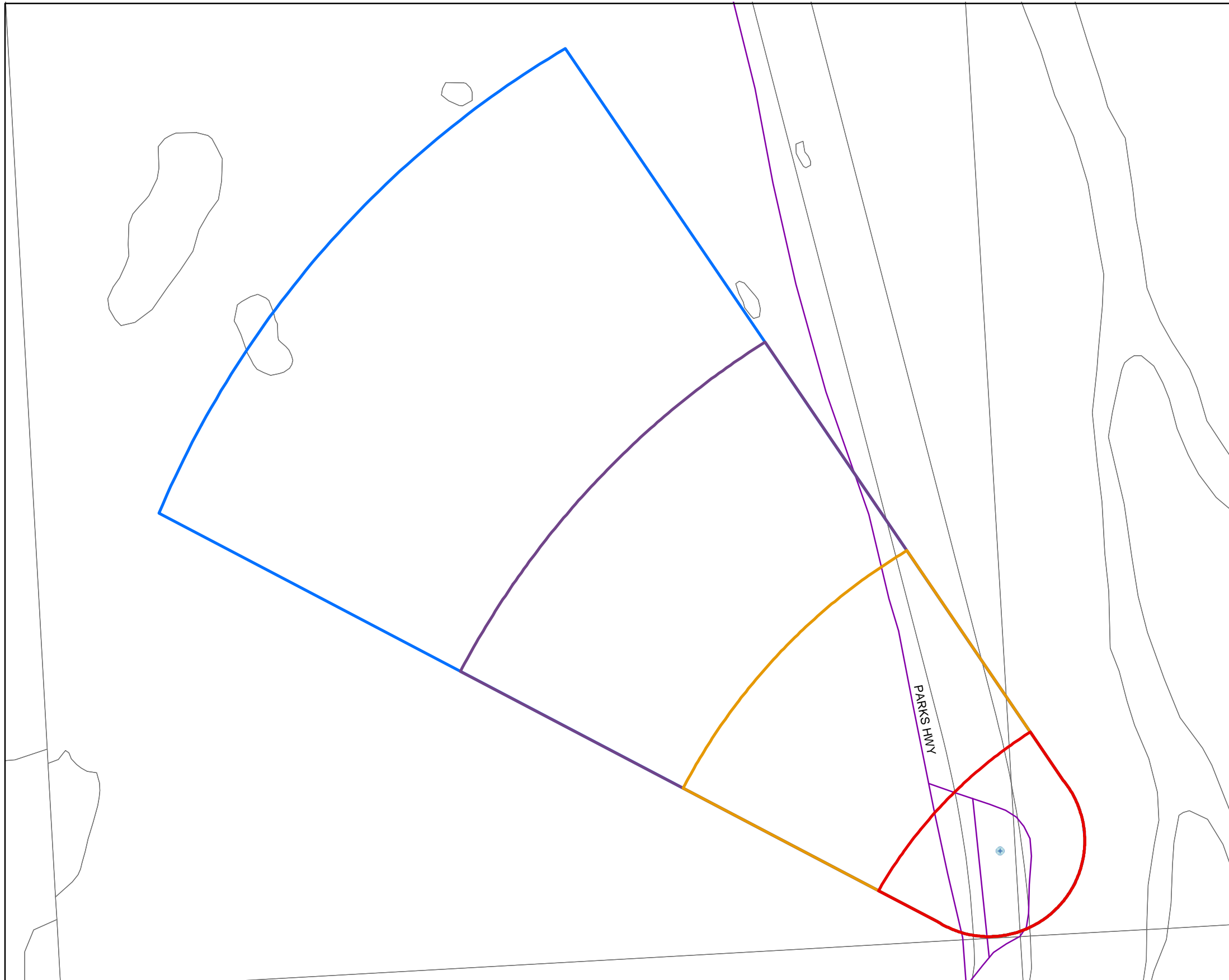
## REFERENCES CITED

- Patrick, L.D., Brabets, T.P., and Glass, R.L., 1989, Simulation of ground-water flow at Anchorage, Alaska: US Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 88-4139, 41p.
- Wang, B., Strelakos, P.M., and Jokela, J.B., 2000, Nitrate source indicators in ground water of the scimitar subdivision, Peters Creek Area, Anchorage, Alaska: US Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 00-4137.
- Weather Underground, June 18, 2002, Web extension to the *Western Regional Climate Center* [WWW document]. URL <http://www.wunderground.com>

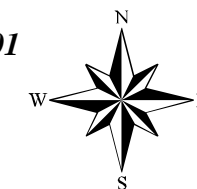
## **APPENDIX A**

### **Chulitna Campground Drinking Water Protection Area (Map 1)**

# Drinking Water Protection Areas for Chulitna Campground



PWSID 226923.001



## Map 1

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Chulitna Campground (Tables 1-4)**

**Table 1**

**Contaminant Source Inventory for  
AK Div. Parks - Chulitna Campground**

**PWSID 226923.001**

<b>Contaminant Source Type</b>	<b>Contaminant Source ID</b>	<b>CS ID tag</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Map Number</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-1	A	Off of Chulitna Access Road 1	3	
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-2	A	Off of Chulitna Access Road 2	3	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Parks Highway	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	A	Chulitna Access Road 1	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-2	A	Chulitna Access Road 2	2	

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for*

*PWSID 226923.001*

*Table 2*

*AK Div. Parks - Chulitna Campground*

*Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

<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>Overall Rank after Analysis</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-1	A	Low	1	Off of Chulitna Access Road 1	3	
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-2	A	Low	2	Off of Chulitna Access Road 2	3	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	3	Parks Highway	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	A	Low	4	Chulitna Access Road 1	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-2	A	Low	5	Chulitna Access Road 2	2	

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for*

*PWSID 226923.001*

*Table 3*

*AK Div. Parks - Chulitna Campground*

*Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

<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>Overall Rank after Analysis</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-1	A	Low	1	Off of Chulitna Access Road 1	3	
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-2	A	Low	2	Off of Chulitna Access Road 2	3	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	3	Parks Highway	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	A	Low	4	Chulitna Access Road 1	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-2	A	Low	5	Chulitna Access Road 2	2	

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for*

*PWSID 226923.001*

*Table 4*

*AK Div. Parks - Chulitna Campground*

*Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals*

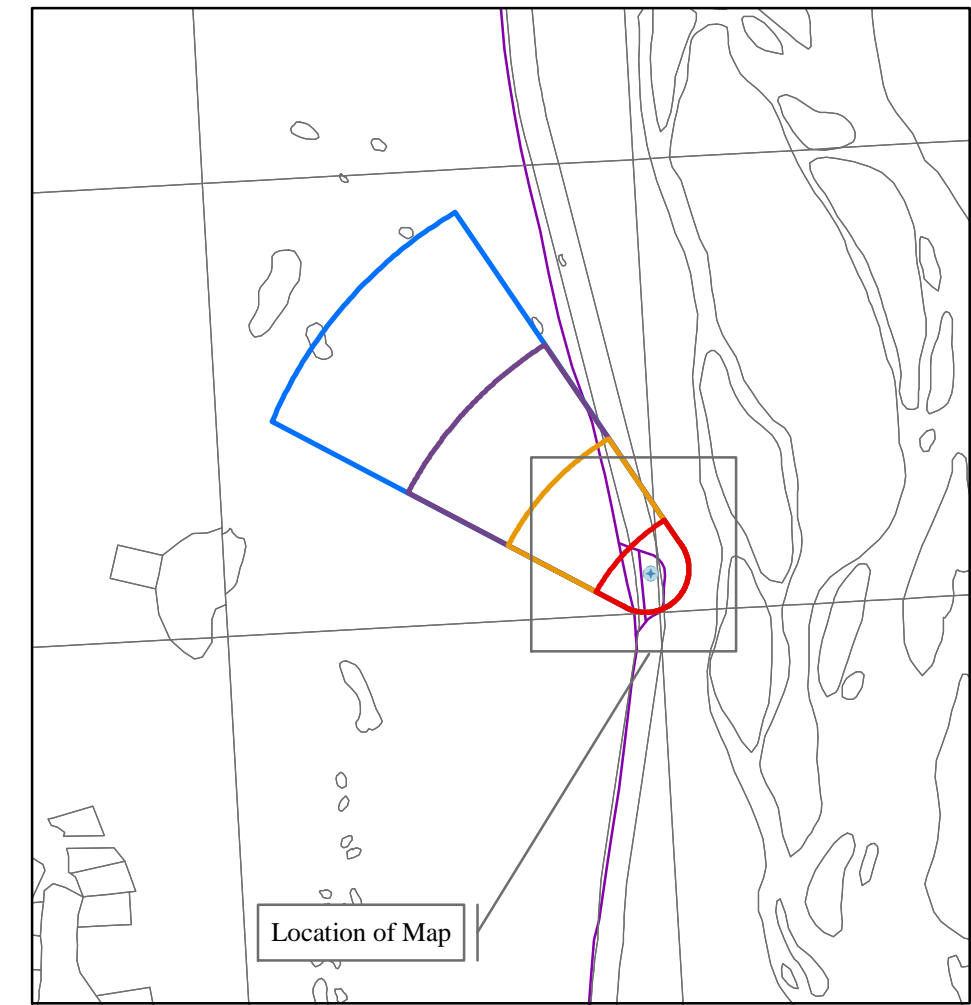
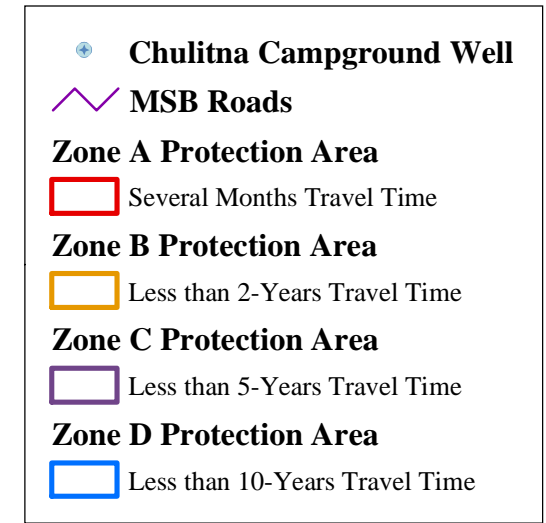
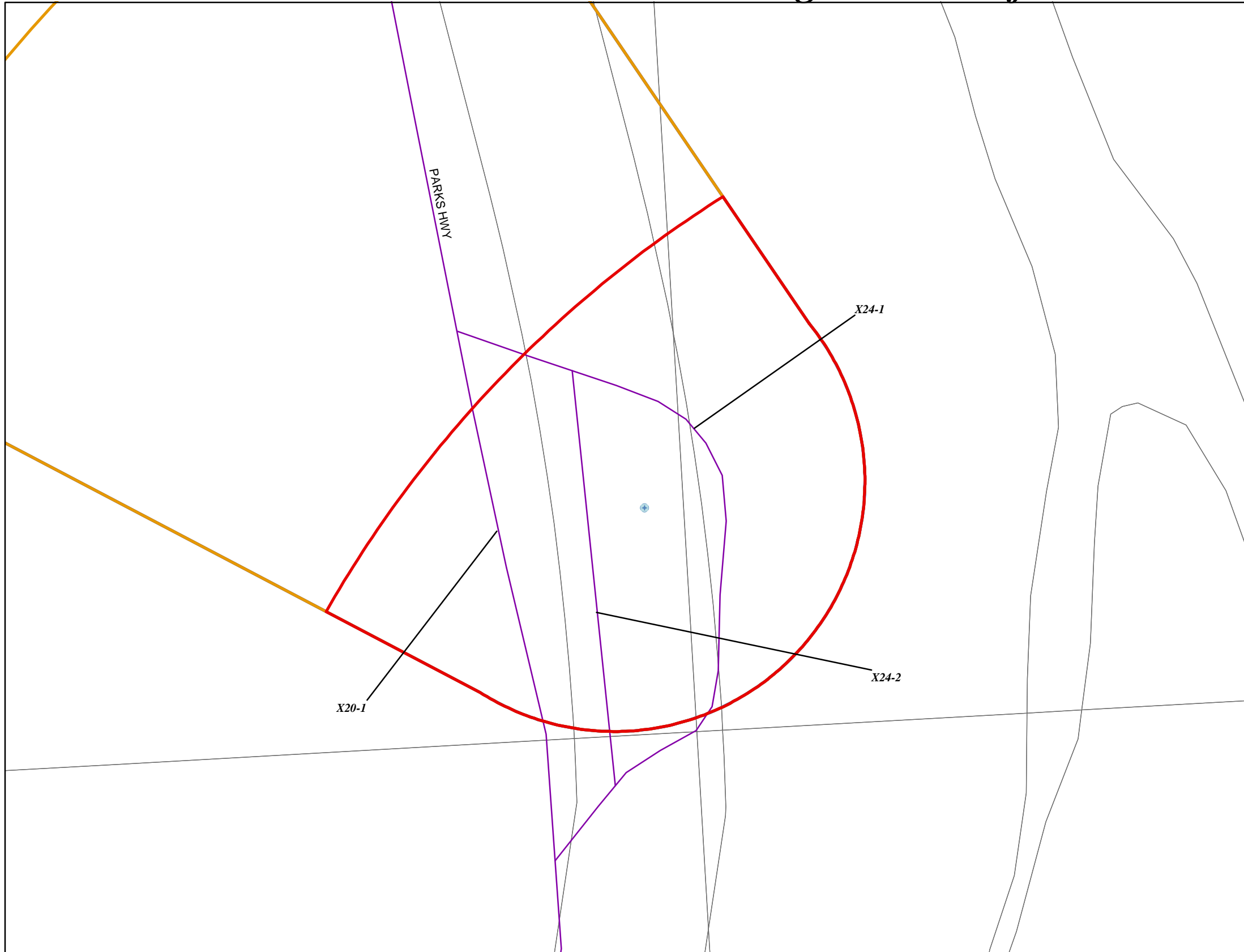
<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Overall Rank after Analysis</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	1	Parks Highway	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	A	Low	2	Chulitna Access Road 1	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-2	A	Low	3	Chulitna Access Road 2	2	



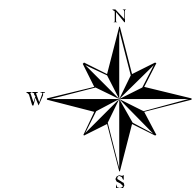
## **APPENDIX C**

### **Chulitna Campground Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Maps 2-3)**

# Drinking Water Protection Areas for Chulitna Campground and Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination

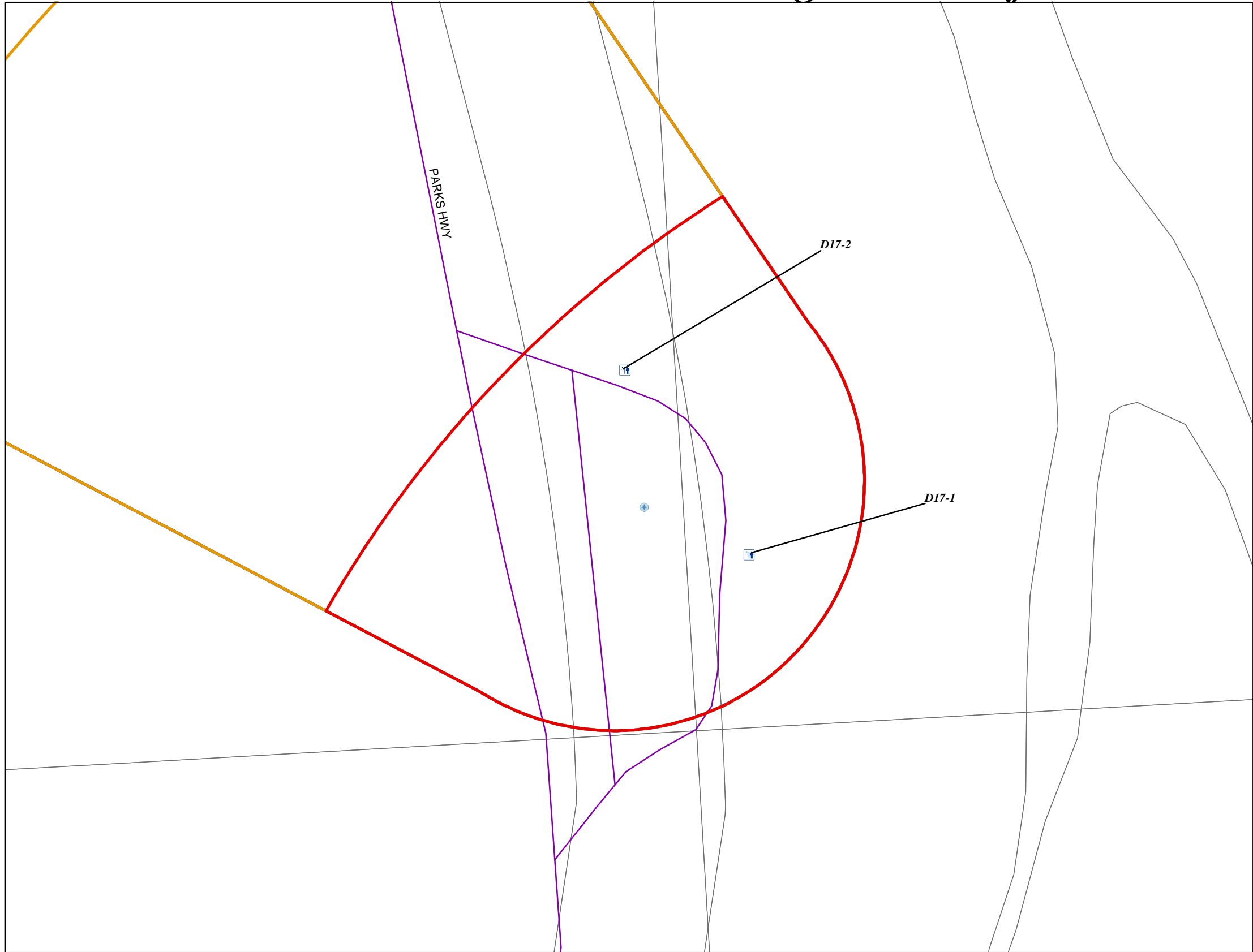


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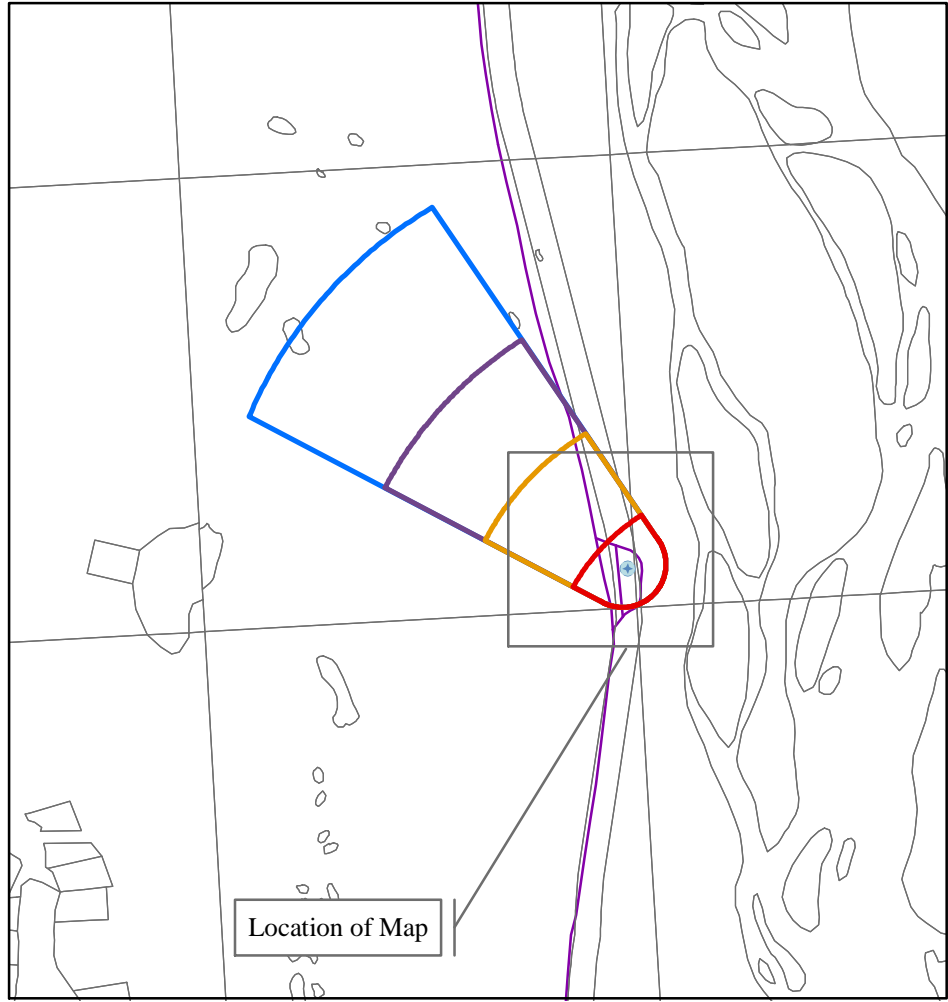


## Map 2

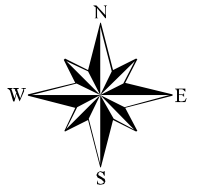
# *Drinking Water Protection Areas for Chulitna Campground and Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination*



- + Chulitna Campground Well
- Pit Toilets (D17)
- MSB Roads
- Zone A Protection Area**  
□ Several Months Travel Time
- Zone B Protection Area**  
□ Less than 2-Years Travel Time
- Zone C Protection Area**  
□ Less than 5-Years Travel Time
- Zone D Protection Area**  
□ Less than 10-Years Travel Time



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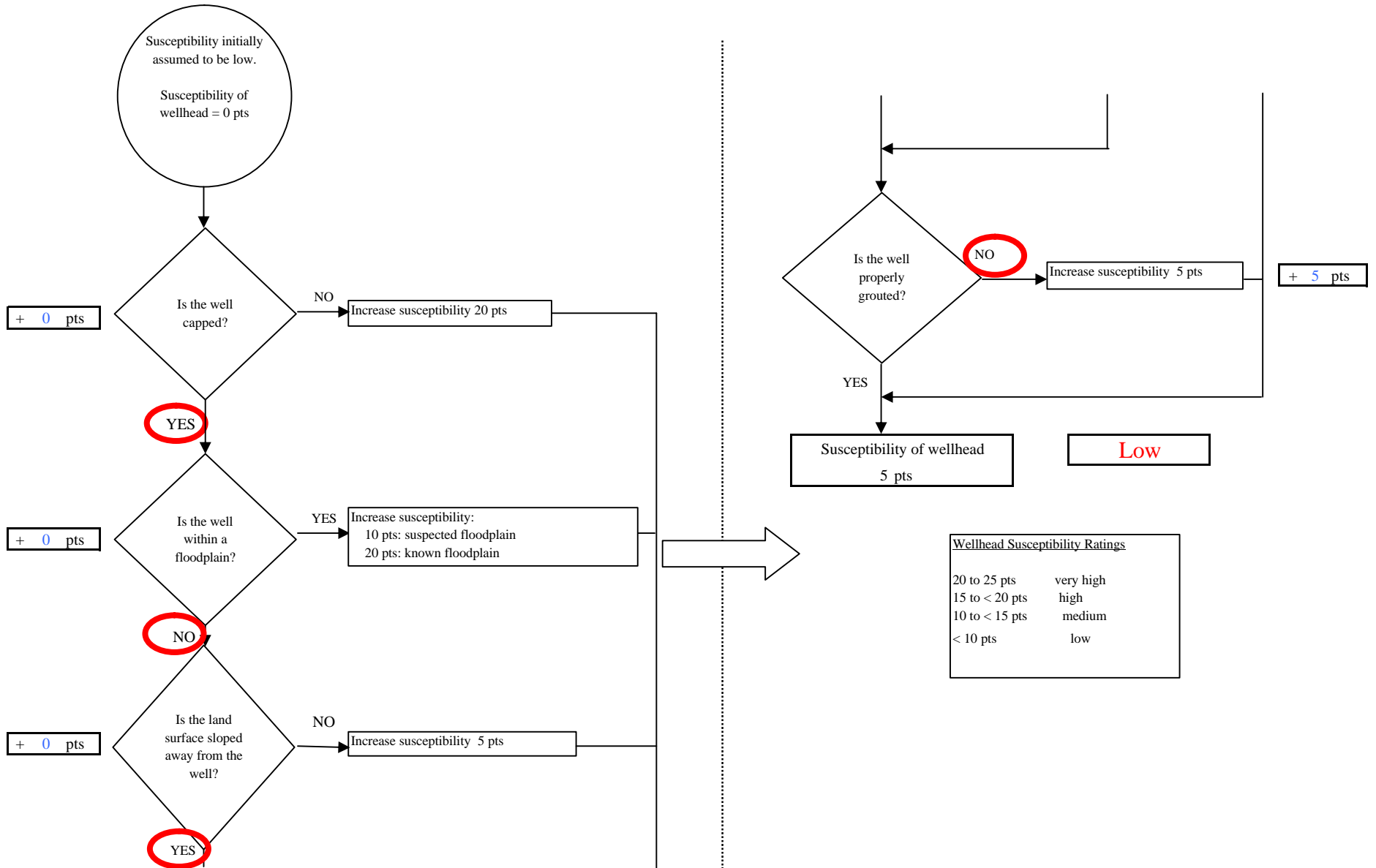


*Map 3*

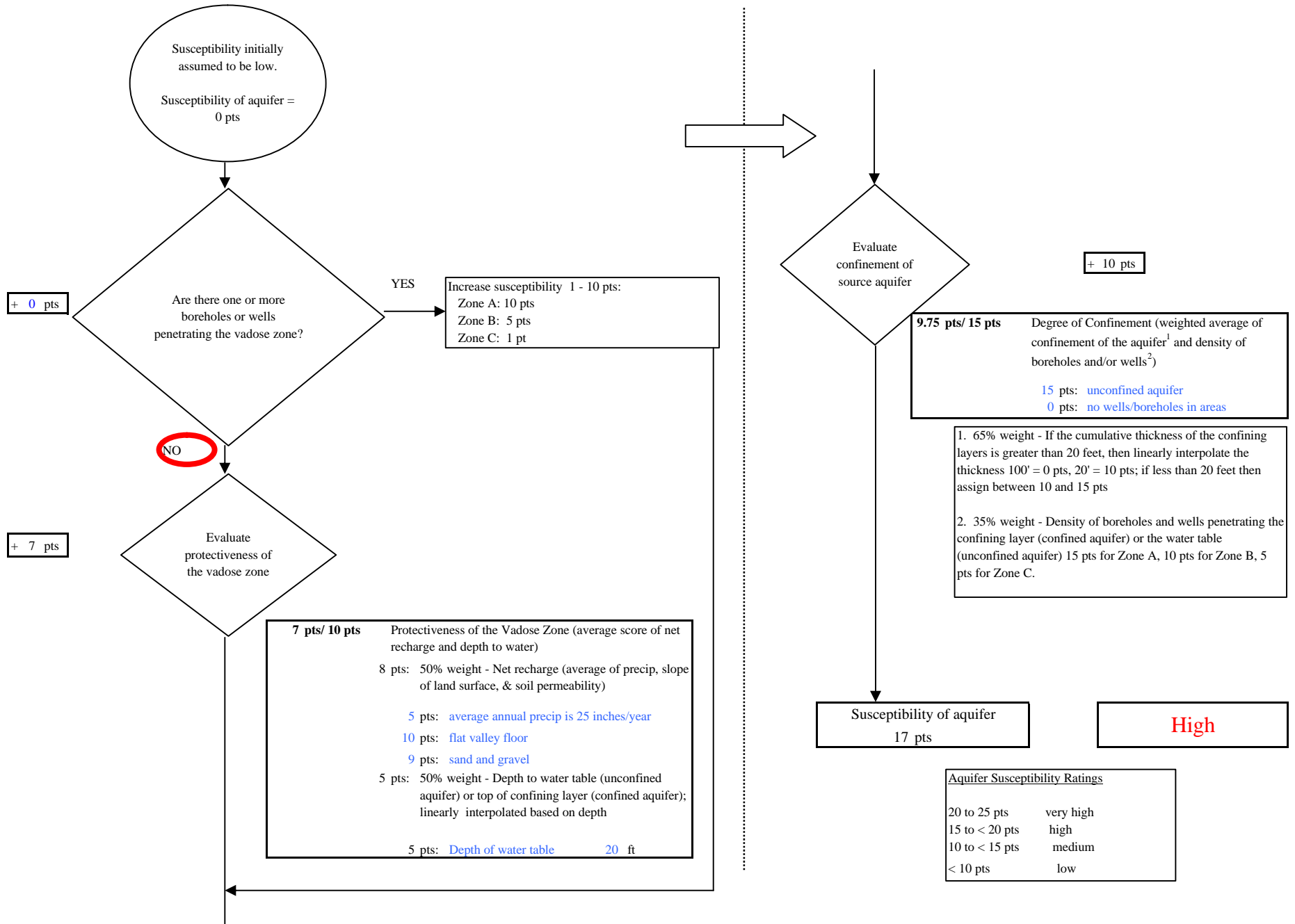
## **APPENDIX D**

### **Vulnerability Analysis for Chulitna Campground Public Drinking Water Source (Charts 1-8)**

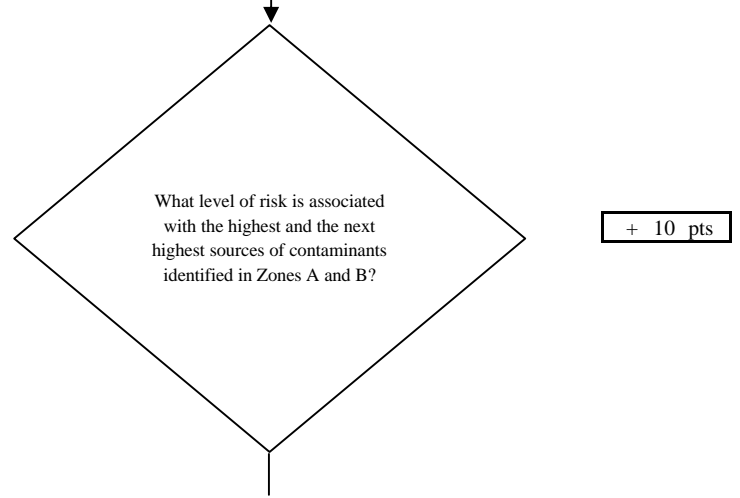
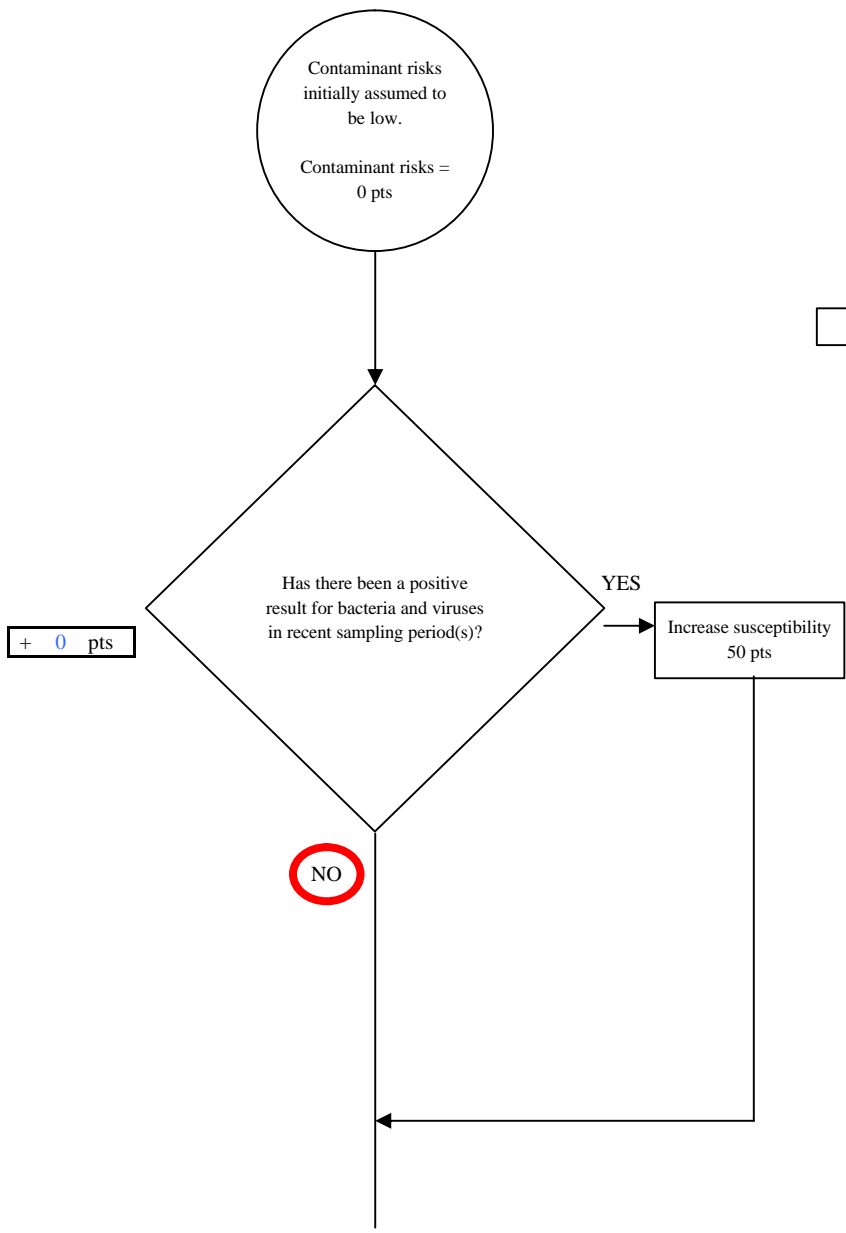
**Chart 1. Susceptibility of the Wellhead - Chulitna Campground**



**Chart 2. Susceptibility of the Aquifer - Chulitna Campground**



**Chart 3. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Bacteria & Viruses**



**Risk Rankings for Contaminant Sources Identified in Zones A and B**

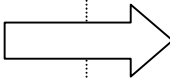
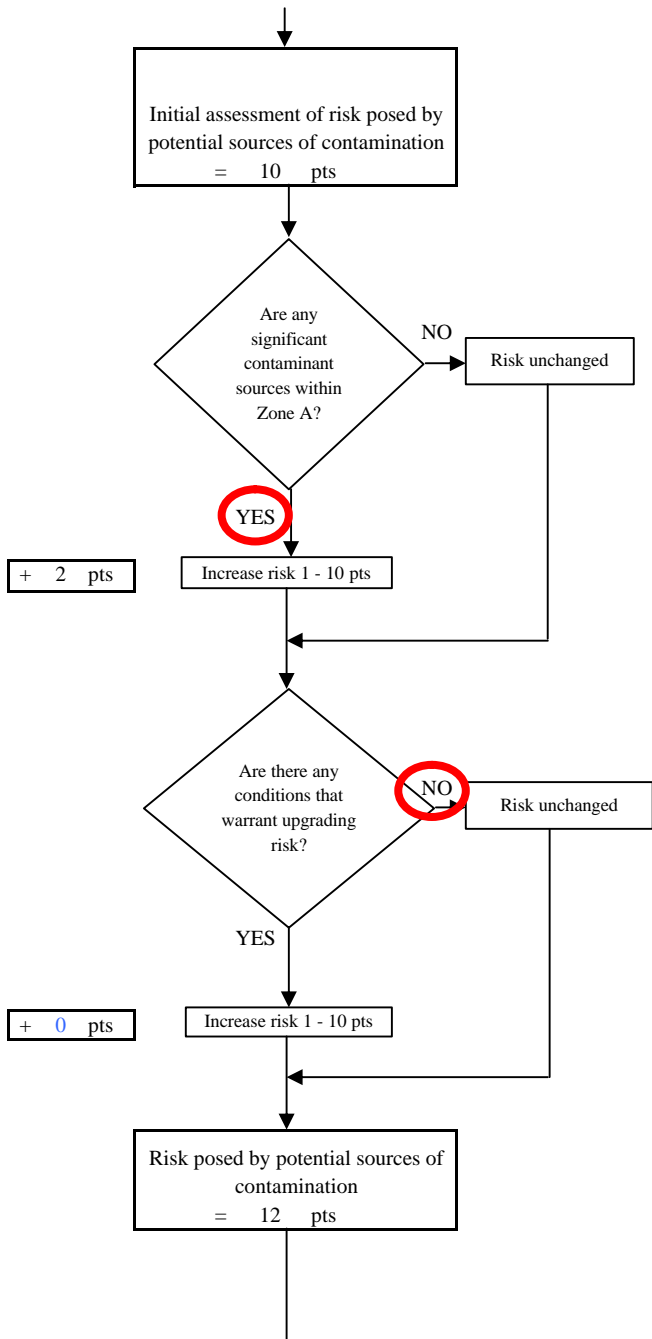
	Zone A	Zone B	Total
Very High(s)	0	0	0
High(s)	0	0	0
Medium(s)	0	0	0
Low(s)	3	0	3

	<b>LOW</b> 10 pts	<b>MEDIUM</b> 20 pts	<b>HIGH</b> 30 pts	<b>VERY HIGH</b> 40 pts
<b>LOW</b>	<sup>3</sup> 10 sources + 10 pts	≥ 10 sources + 5 pts	≥ 20 sources + 5 pts	----
<b>MEDIUM</b>	----	≥ 2 sources + 5 pts	≥ 5 sources + 5 pts	≥ 10 sources + 5 pts
<b>HIGH</b>	----	----	≥ 1 source + 10 pts	≥ 2 sources + 10 pts
<b>VERY HIGH</b>	----	----	----	≥ 1 source + 10 pts

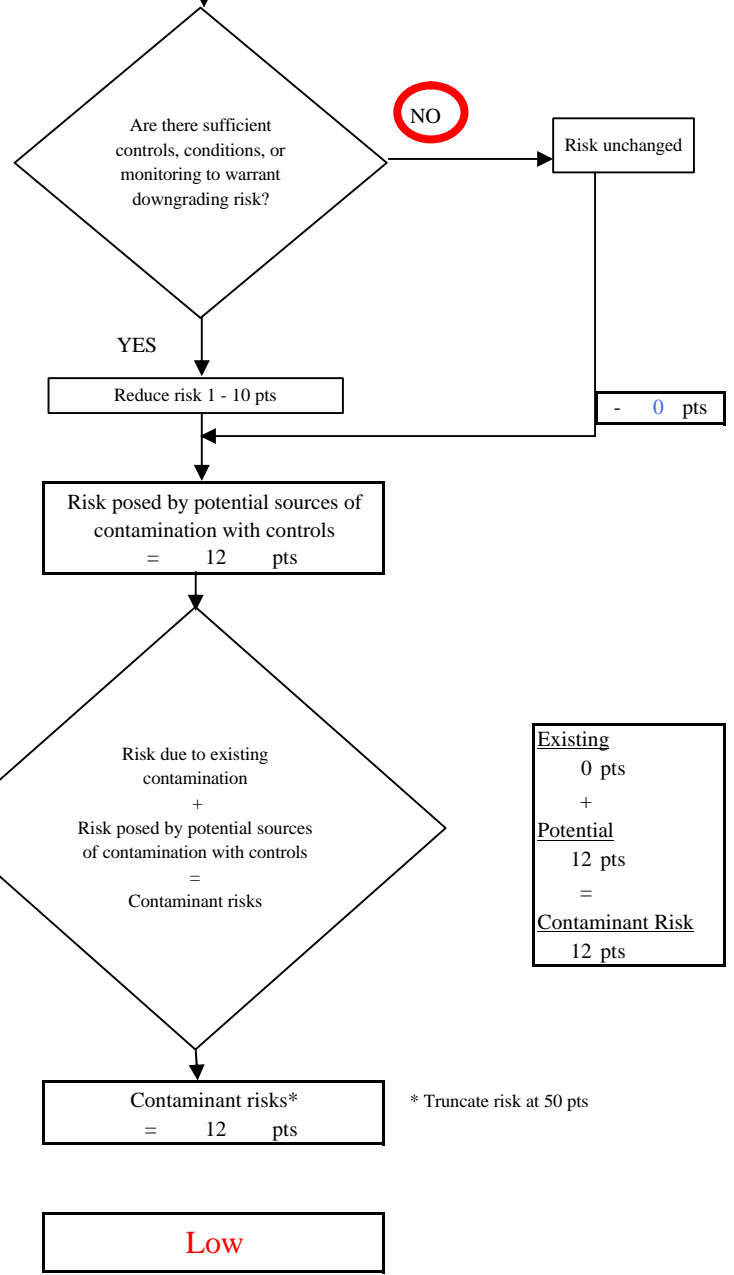
Matrix Score 10

Note: Septic systems, sewerlines, and roads are each assigned a risk ranking for each individual contaminant source in the CSI. The VA, however, counts these contaminant sources as a group and assigns a calculated number of either "lows" or "mediums" based on the density.

**Chart 3. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Bacteria & Viruses**



Contaminant Risk Ratings	
40 to 50 pts	very high
30 to < 40 pts	high
20 to < 30 pts	medium
< 20 pts	low

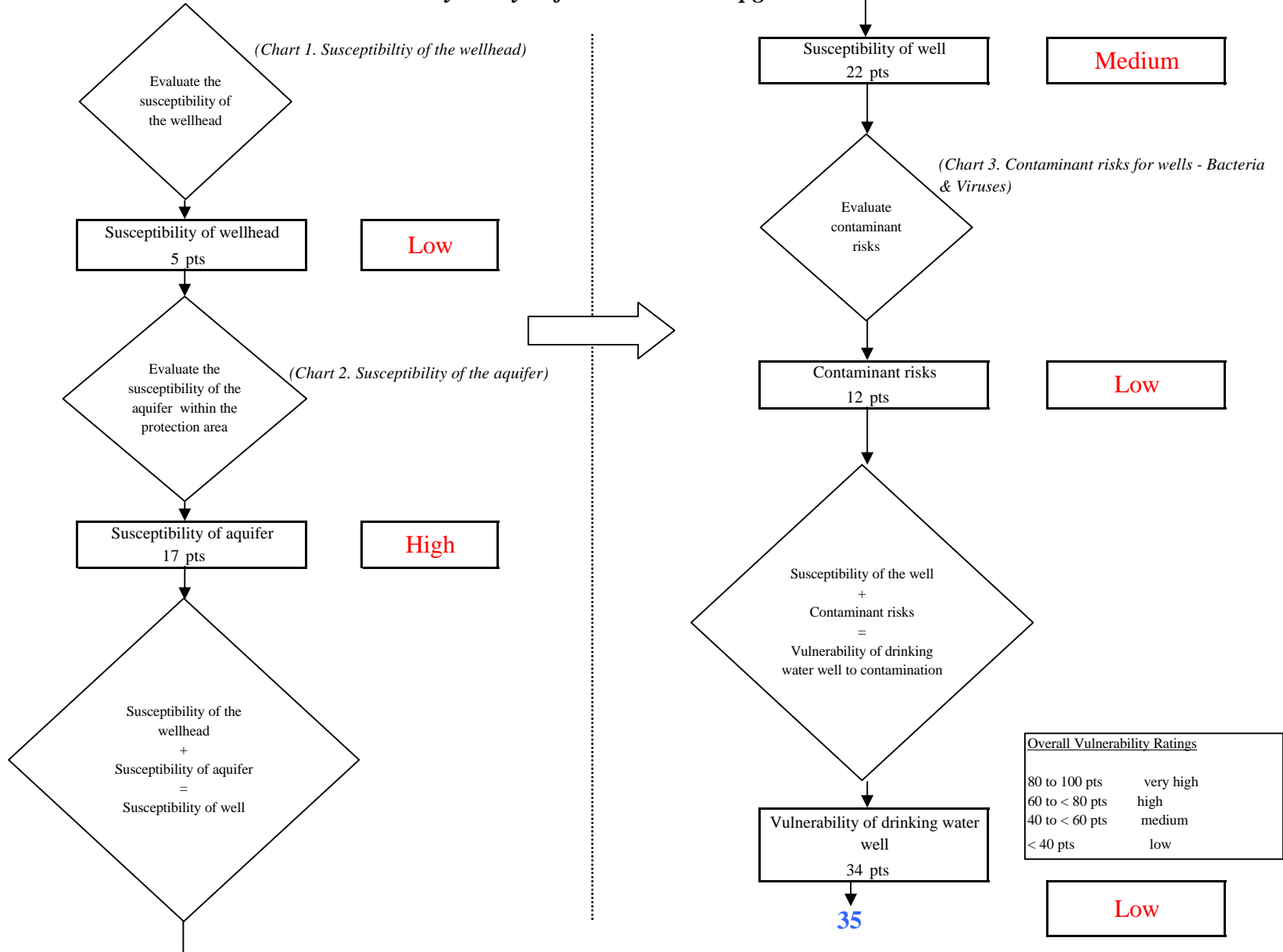


Existing	0 pts
+	
Potential	12 pts
=	
Contaminant Risk	12 pts

\* Truncate risk at 50 pts



**Chart 4. Vulnerability Analysis for Chulitna Campground - Bacteria & Viruses**



**Chart 5. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Nitrates and Nitrites**

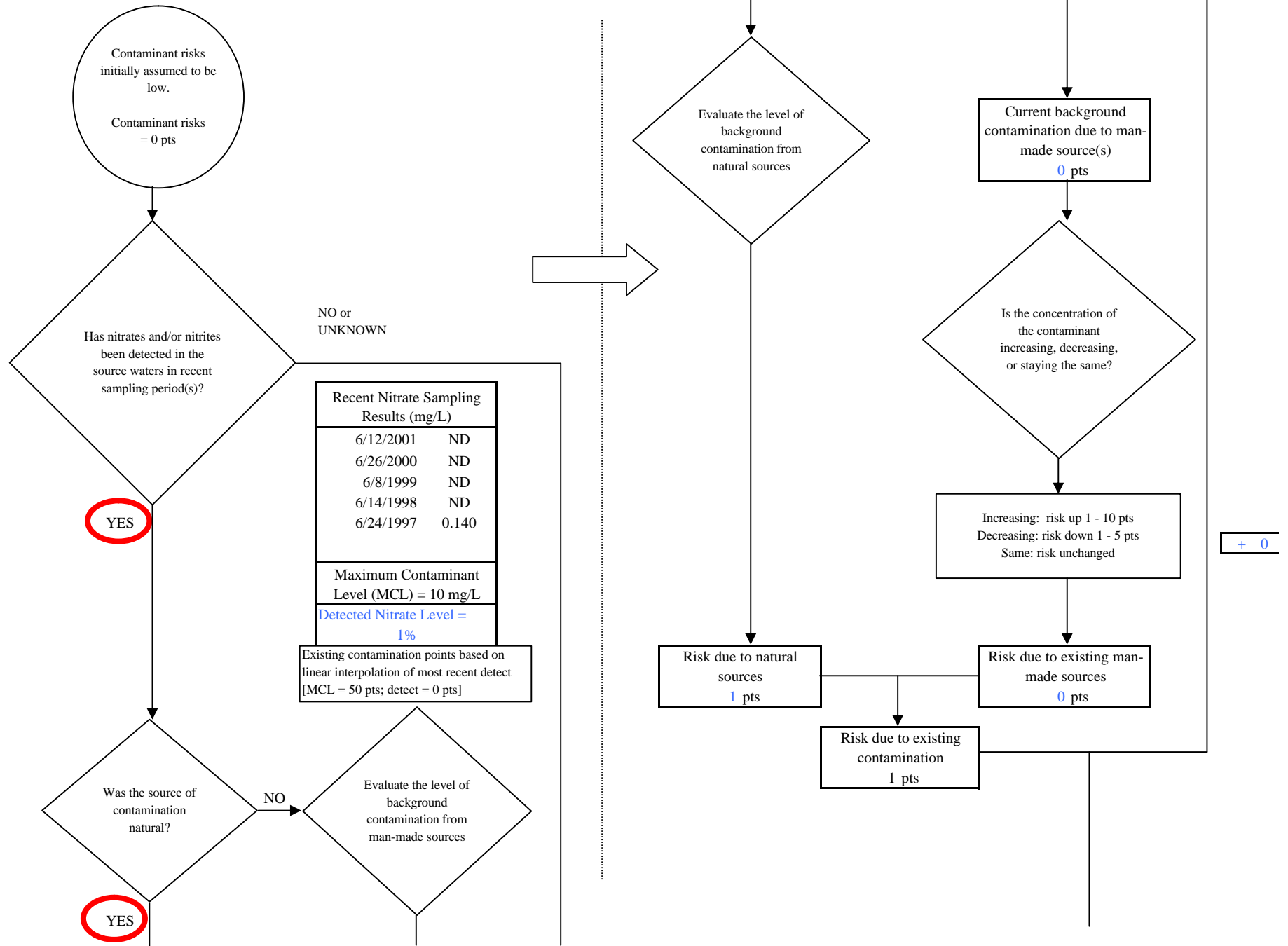
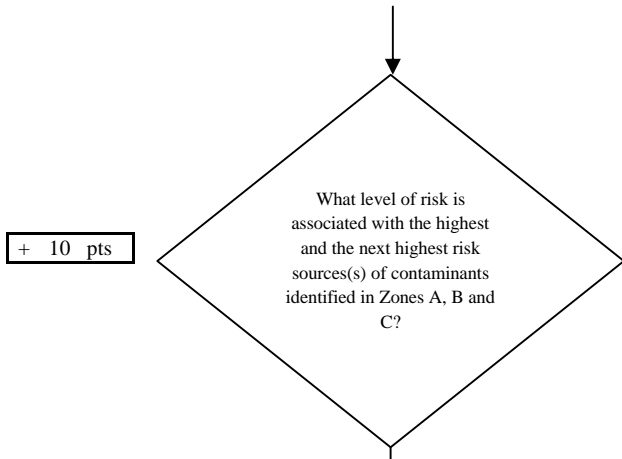


Chart 5. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Nitrates and Nitrites

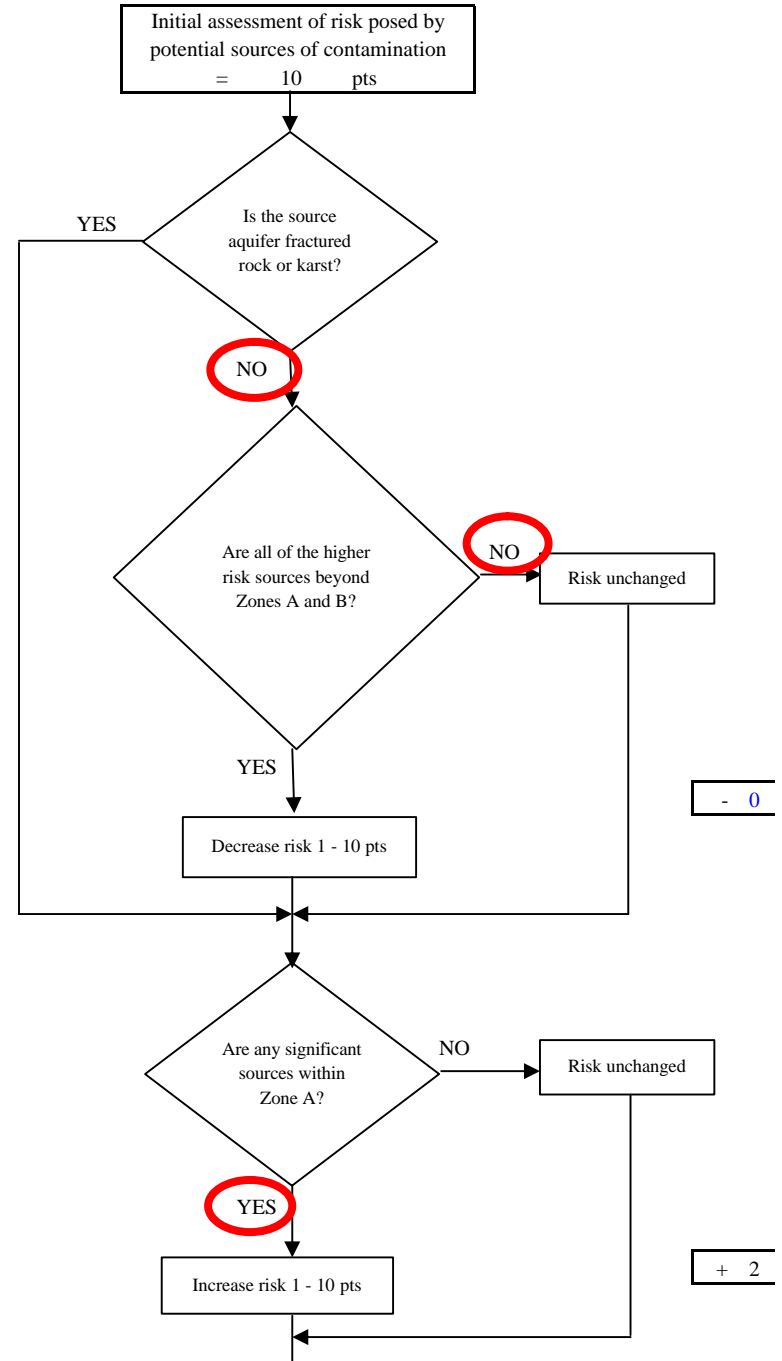


Risk Levels for Contaminant Sources identified in Zones A, B and C			
	Zone A	Zones B&C	Total
Very Highs(s)	0	0	0
High(s)	0	0	0
Medium(s)	0	0	0
Low(s)	3	0	3

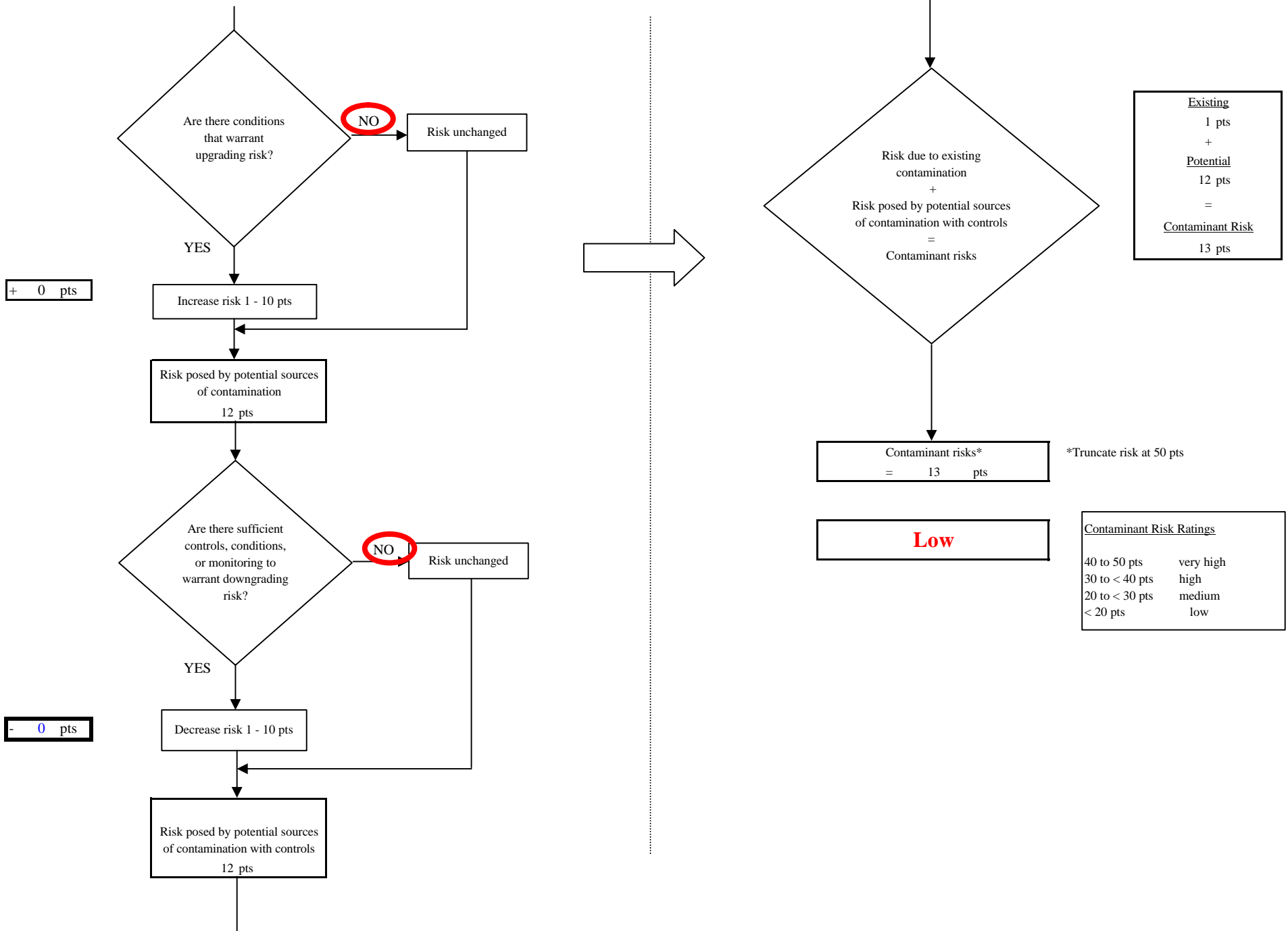
	LOW 10 pts	MEDIUM 20 pts	HIGH 30 pts	VERY HIGH 40 pts
LOW	≥ 10 sources + 10 pts	≥ 10 sources + 5 pts	≥ 20 sources + 5 pts	----
MEDIUM	----	≥ 2 sources + 5 pts	≥ 5 sources + 5 pts	≥ 10 sources + 5 pts
HIGH	----	----	≥ 1 source + 10 pts	≥ 2 sources + 10 pts
VERY HIGH	----	----	----	≥ 1 source + 10 pts

Matrix Score 10

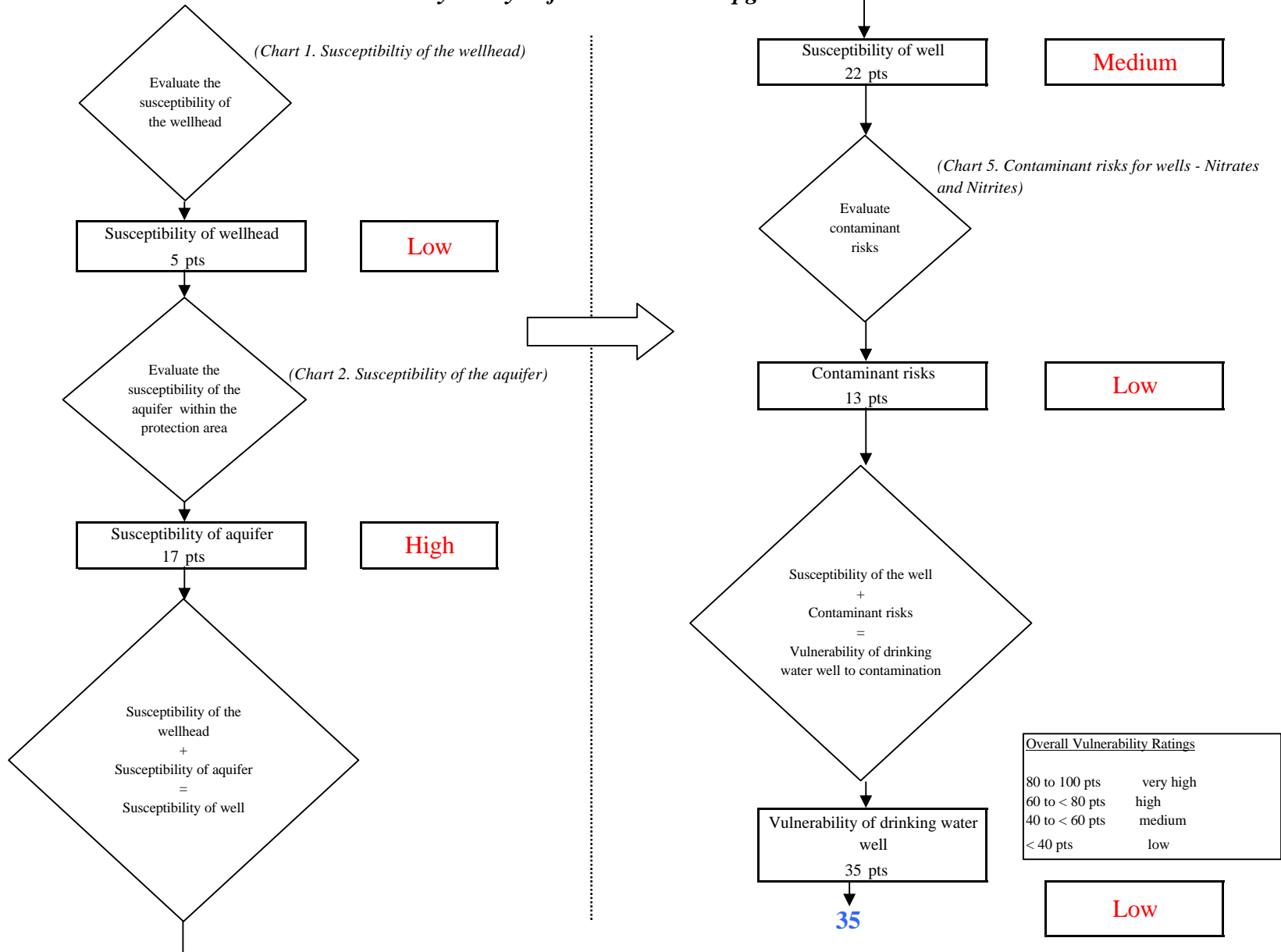
Note: Septic systems, sewerlines, and roads are each assigned a risk ranking for each individual contaminant source in the CSI. The VA, however, counts these contaminant sources as a group and assigns a calculated number of either "lows" or "mediums" based on the density.



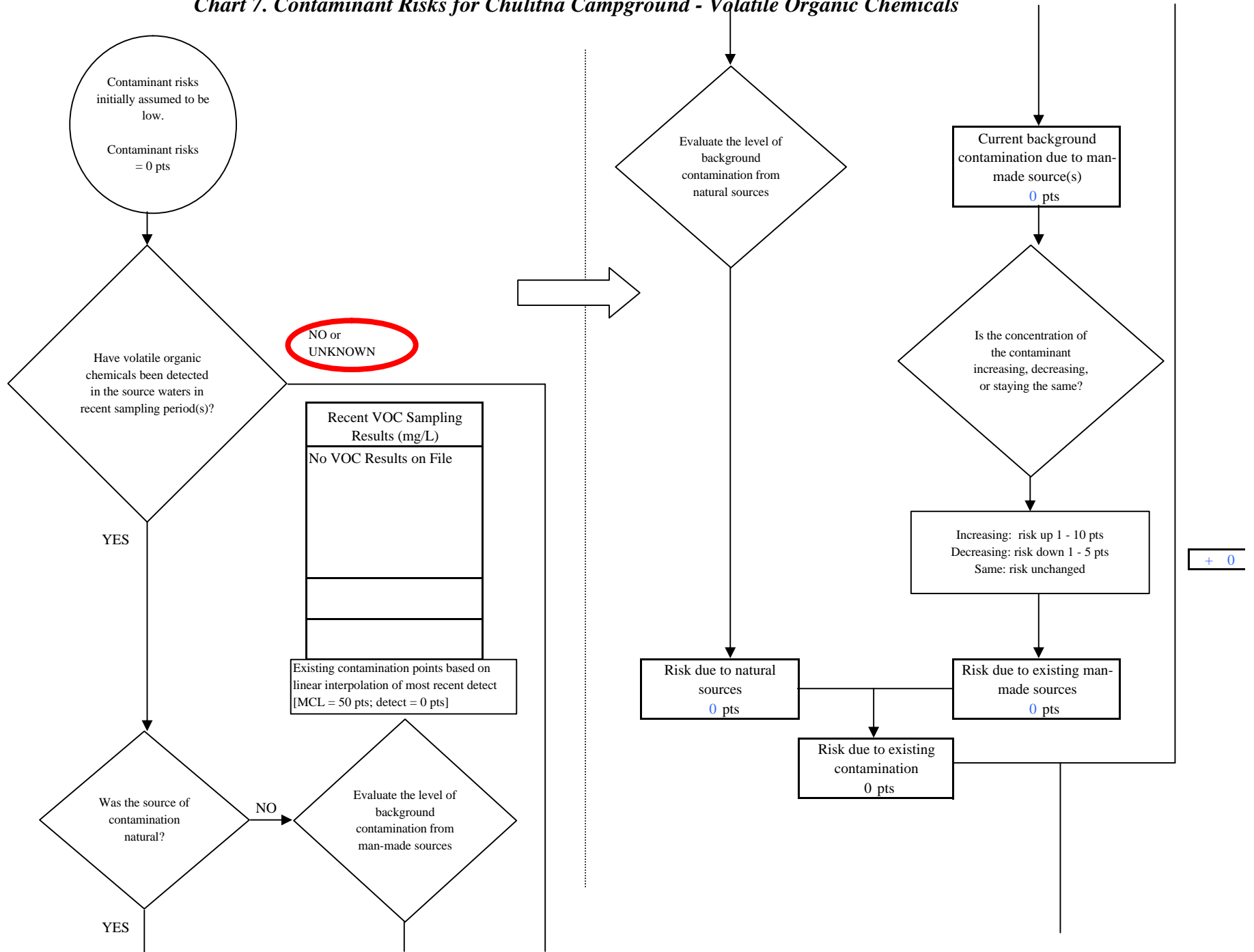
**Chart 5. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Nitrates and Nitrites**



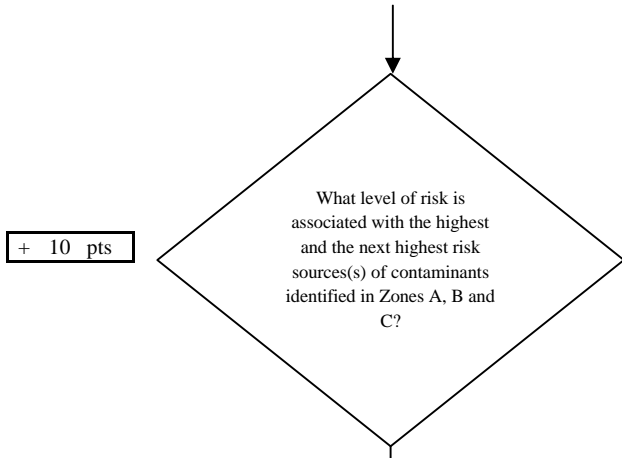
**Chart 6. Vulnerability Analysis for Chulitna Campground - Nitrates and Nitrites**



**Chart 7. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Volatile Organic Chemicals**



**Chart 7. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Volatile Organic Chemicals**

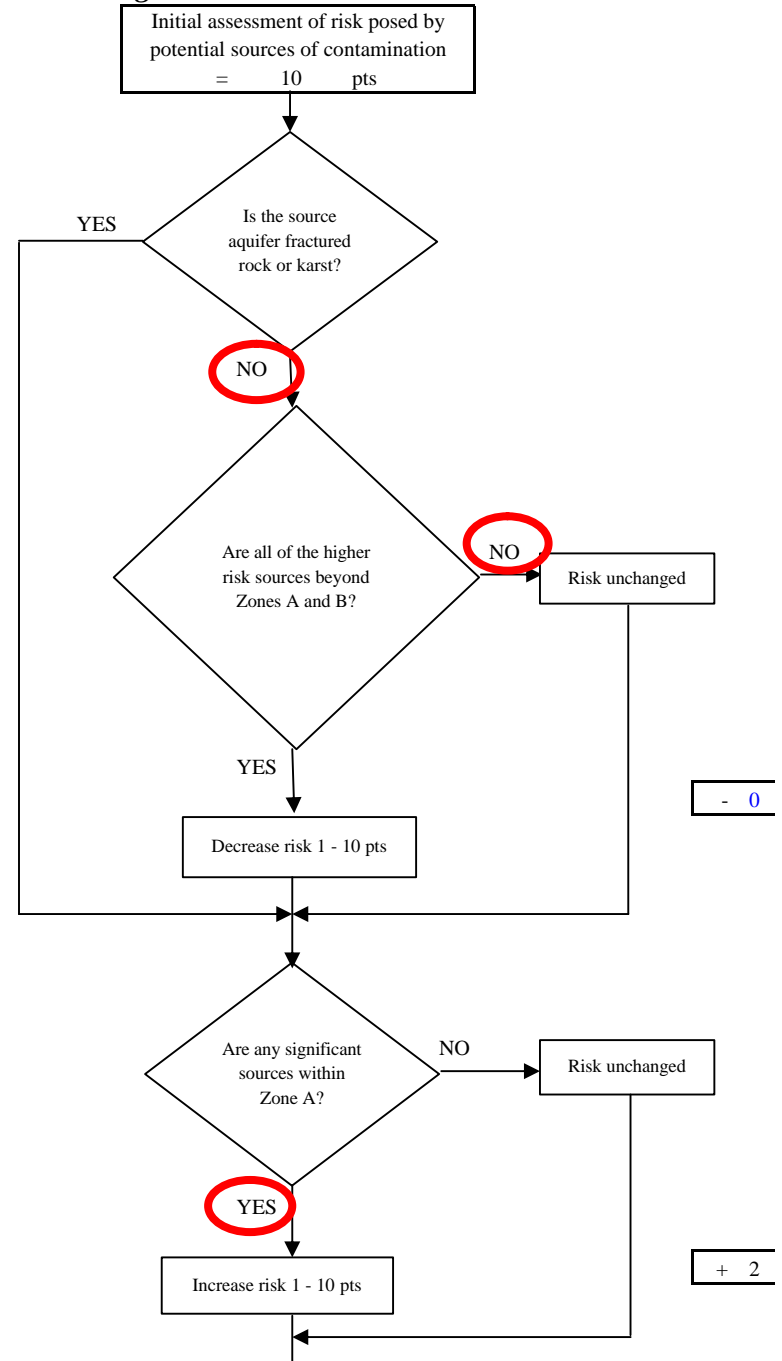


Risk Levels for Contaminant Sources identified in Zones A, B and C			
	Zone A	Zones B&C	Total
Very High(s)	0	0	0
High(s)	0	0	0
Medium(s)	0	0	0
Low(s)	1	0	1

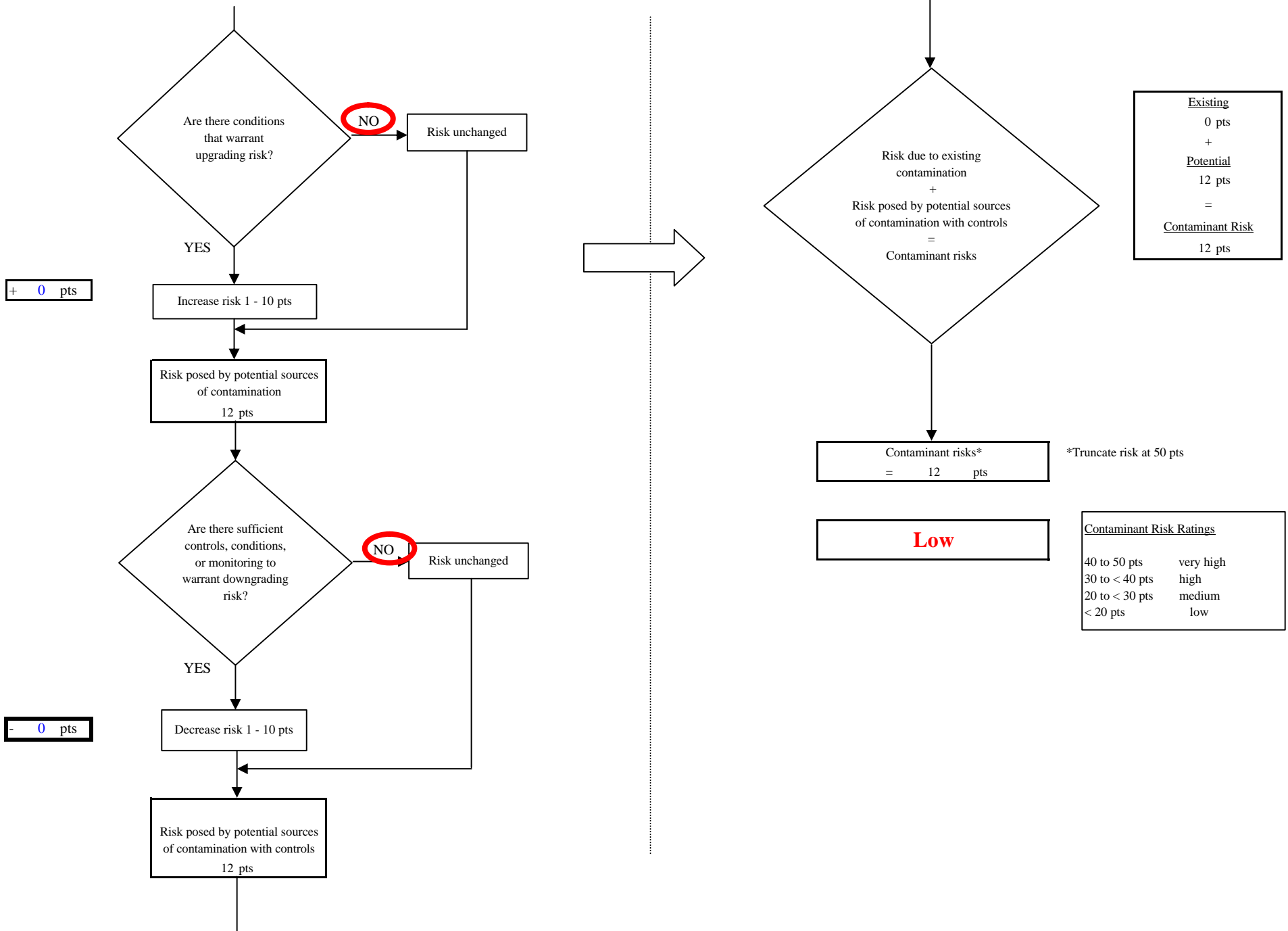
	LOW 10 pts	MEDIUM 20 pts	HIGH 30 pts	VERY HIGH 40 pts
LOW	≥ 10 sources + 10 pts	≥ 10 sources + 5 pts	≥ 20 sources + 5 pts	----
MEDIUM	----	≥ 2 sources + 5 pts	≥ 5 sources + 5 pts	≥ 10 sources + 5 pts
HIGH	----	----	≥ 1 source + 10 pts	≥ 2 sources + 10 pts
VERY HIGH	----	----	----	≥ 1 source + 10 pts

Matrix Score 10

Note: Septic systems, sewerlines, and roads are each assigned a risk ranking for each individual contaminant source in the CSI. The VA, however, counts these contaminant sources as a group and assigns a calculated number of either "lows" or "mediums" based on the density.



**Chart 7. Contaminant Risks for Chulitna Campground - Volatile Organic Chemicals**





**Chart 8. Vulnerability Analysis for Chulitna Campground - Volatile Organic Chemicals**

