



Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and
Vulnerability Assessment for
Copper Center Lodge – New Well
Public Drinking Water System,
Copper Center, Alaska
PWSID # 292801.001

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION REPORT 1769

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

February, 2009

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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.

February, 2009

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Source Water Assessment for Copper Center Lodge – New Well Source of Public Drinking Water, Copper Center, Alaska

Drinking Water Protection Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public water system for Copper Center Lodge is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of two wells located at Mile 101 of the Old Richardson Highway, on Loop Road in Copper Center, Alaska. This Source Water Assessment applies only to PWSID 292801.001, also known as the New Well. The wellhead received a susceptibility rating of **Very High** and the aquifer received a susceptibility rating of **Very High**. Combining these two ratings produces a **Very High** rating for the natural susceptibility of the well. Identified potential and existing sources of contaminants for the Copper Center Lodge – New Well public drinking water source include: assumed septic systems, assumed residential heating oil tanks, and roads. 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, this public water source for Copper Center Lodge received a vulnerability rating of **High** for all three contaminant categories. 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 Copper Center Lodge to protect public health.

COPPER CENTER LODGE –NEW WELL PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

The Copper Center Lodge public water system is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of two wells located at Mile 101 of the Old Richardson Highway, on Loop Road in Copper Center, Alaska (see Map A in Appendix A). This Source Water Assessment applies only to PWSID 292801.001, also known as the New Well. The community of Copper Center (population 337) lies on the west bank of the Copper River, at its confluence with the Klutina River. It is located between Mile 101 and Mile 105 of the Richardson Highway, approximately 200 road miles east of Anchorage, and incorporates the Native Village of Kluti-Kaah. The area receives 9 inches of precipitation annually, and average temperatures reach -10 degrees Fahrenheit in January and 56 degrees Fahrenheit in July (ADCCED, 2009).

Most homes in the area have private wells, although water quality can be very poor in the area, so many residents choose to have treated water hauled in from a

well operated by Copper Center Safe Water. Copper Valley Electric provides electricity (ADCCED, 2009).

Copper Center lies in the southern portion of the Copper River basin, in southeastern Interior Alaska. The basin, ranging from nearly 500 feet to more than 4,000 feet above sea level, is an intermontane basin rimmed by peaks of the Chugach, Alaska, Talkeetna, and Wrangell mountain ranges. The terrain of the basin can be divided into two physiographic sub-units: the Copper River basin piedmont surface, and the Copper River basin trough. The Copper River basin trough is generally flat, while the Copper River basin piedmont surface has a rolling, hummocky character (Nichols, 1956).

The terrain and geology of the basin have been formed from events from the Pleistocene era through to recent times. Glaciers from the Chugach, Wrangell, Talkeetna, and Alaska Ranges have repeatedly invaded the basin, perhaps at times filling it and flowing across the divides to the north, west, east, and south. Such extensive glaciation has resulted in the deposition of thick layers of coarse glacial boulder clays (till) and coarse outwash gravel and sand on the piedmont surface, with finer till and outwash mixed with lake deposits in the basin trough. As a result, soils in the area generally consist of silt, clay and till, layered with sand and gravel (Nichols, 1956).

According to the well log (07/27/1989), the New Well at the Copper Center Lodge extends approximately 95 feet below the ground surface although it was backfilled to approximately 45 feet. It is completed in an unconfined aquifer.

This system operates year-round and serves twenty residents and seventy-eight non-residents through two service connections.

COPPER CENTER LODGE – NEW 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 the New Well at the Copper Center Lodge 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 Copper Center Lodge – New 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 COPPER CENTER LODGE – NEW 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.

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

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 New Well at the Copper Center Lodge received a **Very High** susceptibility rating. No sanitary survey is available for this system. It is assumed that no sanitary seal is installed on the well, the land surface is not sloped away from the well, and the well is not 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 Copper Center Lodge – New Well system draws water from an unconfined aquifer consisting of silt and gravel. It received a **Very High** susceptibility rating because of its unconfined nature, shallow depth, and the presence of other wells penetrating the vadose zone within 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. Other wells penetrating the vadose zone can also allow contaminants to travel down to the shared aquifer with precipitation and runoff.

Table 2 summarizes the Susceptibility scores and ratings for the Copper Center Lodge - New Well system.

Table 2. Susceptibility

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	25	Very High
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	25	Very High
Natural Susceptibility	50	Very High

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:

Contaminant Risk Ratings	
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 Copper Center Lodge – New Well system.

Table 3. Contaminant Risks

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	22	Medium
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	15	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:

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

Again, rankings are assigned according to a point score:

Overall Vulnerability Ratings	
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 Copper Center Lodge – New Well system. Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five.

Table 4. Overall Vulnerability

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	70	High
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	65	High
Volatile Organic Chemicals	75	High

Bacteria and Viruses

The contaminant risk to the drinking water well for bacteria and viruses is determined to be **Medium**, with risk resulting primarily from positive coliform sampling results. Assumed septic systems and roads also contribute 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.

Bacteria and viruses have been detected during the last five years of sampling at Copper Center Lodge, on 08/29/2007, 09/10/2007, and 09/25/2007 (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 **High**.

Nitrates and Nitrites

The contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites for the New Well at Copper Center Lodge is determined to be **Low**, with assumed septic systems and roads contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The sampling history for Copper Center Lodge indicates that nitrates and nitrites have been detected within the last five years, with the highest concentration of 0.681 mg/L of nitrate detected on 09/10/2007 (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 **High**.

Volatile Organic Chemicals

The contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals is determined to be **Medium**, with assumed septic systems, assumed residential heating oil tanks and roads contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The drinking water at Copper Center Lodge 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 Copper Center Lodge 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 Copper Center Lodge 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

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

Nichols, Donald R, 1956. Information from Permafrost and Groundwater Conditions in the Glennallen area, Alaska, Open File Report 56-91, U.S. Geological Survey.

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APPENDIX A

Copper Center Lodge – New Well Drinking Water Protection Area Location Map (Map A)

Public Water Well System for PWS #292801.001 Copper Center Lodge - New Well



Legend

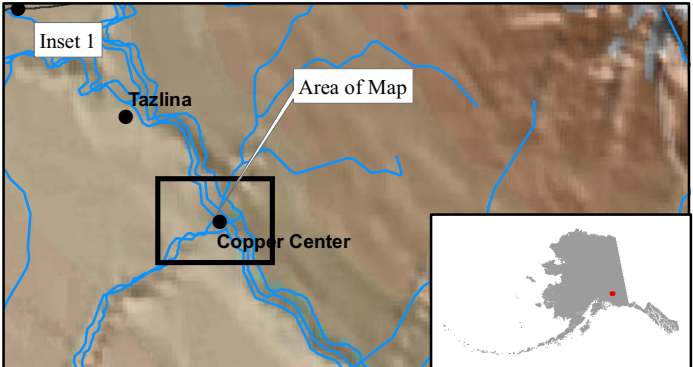
- Class B Public Water System Well
- Groundwater Protection Zones**
- Zone A Protection Area - Several Months Travel Time
- Zone B Protection Area - 2 Years Travel Time

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.



Copper Center Lodge - New Well
 PWS 292801.001

Appendix A Map A

APPENDIX B

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Copper Center Lodge – New Well (Tables 1-4)

Table 1

**Contaminant Source Inventory for
COPPER CENTER LODGE**

PWSID 292801.001

Contaminant Source Type	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID tag	Zone	Map Number	Comments
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	C	3 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	C	3 assumed heating oil tanks
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	C	1 road
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	B	C	16 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	B	C	16 assumed heating oil tanks
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	C	2 roads

Table 2

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
COPPER CENTER LODGE
Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

PWSID 292801.001

<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	3 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	16 assumed septic systems
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	Low	C	2 roads

Table 3

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
COPPER CENTER LODGE
Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

PWSID 292801.001

<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	3 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	16 assumed septic systems
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	Low	C	2 roads

Table 4

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
COPPER CENTER LODGE
Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals*

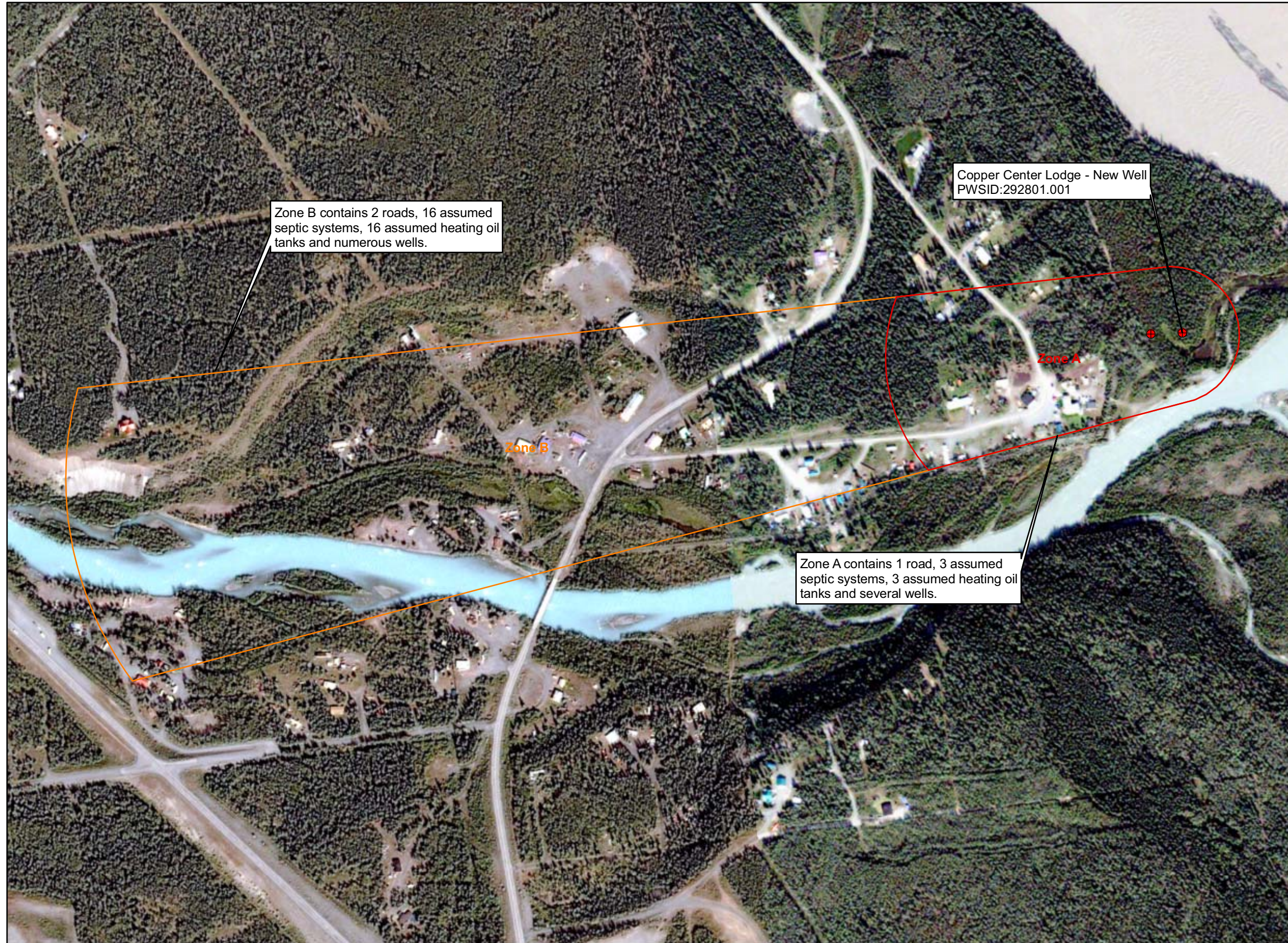
PWSID 292801.001

<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	3 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	Medium	C	3 assumed heating oil tanks
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	16 assumed septic systems
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	B	Medium	C	16 assumed heating oil tanks
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	B	Low	C	2 roads

APPENDIX C

Copper Center Lodge – New Well Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Map C)

**Public Water Well System for PWS # 292801.001 Copper Center Lodge - New Well
Showing Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination**



Zone B contains 2 roads, 16 assumed septic systems, 16 assumed heating oil tanks and numerous wells.

Copper Center Lodge - New Well
PWSID:292801.001

Zone A contains 1 road, 3 assumed septic systems, 3 assumed heating oil tanks and several wells.

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)

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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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