



Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and
Vulnerability Assessment for
Alaska Airlines - Cordova
Public Drinking Water System,
Cordova, Alaska
PWSID # 299068.001

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION REPORT 1780

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

January, 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.

January, 2009

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Source Water Assessment for Alaska Airlines - Cordova

Source of Public Drinking Water, Cordova, Alaska

Drinking Water Protection Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public water system for Alaska Airlines - Cordova is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well located at Mile 13 of the Copper River Highway, in Cordova, Alaska. The wellhead received a susceptibility rating of **Low** and the aquifer received a susceptibility rating of **High**. Combining these two ratings produces a **Medium** rating for the natural susceptibility of the well. Identified potential and existing sources of contaminants for Alaska Airlines - Cordova public drinking water source include: assumed and confirmed septic systems, assumed and confirmed residential heating oil tanks, 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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova received a vulnerability rating of **Low** for bacteria and viruses, **Low** for nitrates and nitrites, and **Medium** 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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova to protect public health.

ALASKA AIRLINES - CORDOVA PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

Alaska Airlines - Cordova public water system is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well located at Mile 13 of the Copper River Highway, in Cordova, Alaska (see Map A in Appendix A). Cordova (population 2,194) lies at the southeastern edge of Prince William Sound, at the base of Mount Eyak. It is 150 miles southeast of Anchorage, and 52 miles south of Valdez. It has no road access, although there is a limited road system throughout the area.

The region receives 80 inches of snowfall a year, and a total of 167 inches of precipitation annually. Average winter temperatures range from 17 to 28 degrees Fahrenheit, while average summer temperatures range from 49 to 63 degrees Fahrenheit (ADCCED, 2009).

The City operates piped water system, supplying treated water to the community. Sewage is also collected and undergoes treatment before being discharged into the Sound. Although some homes have individual septic

systems and wells, the vast majority rely on the City for these services. Electricity is provided by the Cordova Electrical Cooperative, which operates two diesel-powered plants and a small hydro facility.

According to the well log (08/17/2000), the Alaska Airlines - Cordova well extends approximately 81 feet below the ground surface and is completed in an unconfined aquifer. This system operates year-round and serves ten residents and one hundred non-residents through three service connections.

ALASKA AIRLINES - CORDOVA 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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova 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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova 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 ALASKA AIRLINES - CORDOVA 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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova received a **Low** susceptibility rating. The most recent sanitary survey (09/17/2002) indicates that a sanitary seal is installed on the well, and the land surface is sloped away from the well, but 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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova system draws water from an unconfined aquifer consisting of sand, silt, and gravel. It received a **High** susceptibility rating because of its relatively shallow, unconfined nature and the presence of other wells penetrating the shared aquifer. 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 in the protection area can also allow contaminants to travel in to the shared aquifer with precipitation and runoff. As the Cordova area receives abundant rainfall and is surrounded by steep topography, the resulting high levels of precipitation and surface water runoff exacerbate these risks.

Table 2 summarizes the Susceptibility scores and ratings for the Alaska Airlines - Cordova system.

Table 2. Susceptibility

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	5	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	18	High
Natural Susceptibility	23	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:

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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova system.

Table 3. Contaminant Risks

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	12	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	12	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	30	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:

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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova system. Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five.

Table 4. Overall Vulnerability

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	35	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	35	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	55	Medium

Bacteria and Viruses

The contaminant risk to the drinking water well for bacteria and viruses is determined to be **Low** with assumed and confirmed septic systems 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. Bacteria and viruses have not been detected in the water within the last five years of sampling at Alaska Airlines - Cordova (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 for Alaska Airlines - Cordova is determined to be **Low** with assumed and confirmed septic systems and a road contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The sampling history for Alaska Airlines - Cordova indicates that nitrates and nitrites have not been detected within the last five years of sampling (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 **High** with assumed and confirmed septic systems, assumed and confirmed residential heating oil tanks and a road contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

Volatile organic chemicals have not been detected within the last five years (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 **Medium**.

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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova 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 Alaska Airlines - Cordova 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.

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




APPENDIX A

Alaska Airlines - Cordova Drinking Water Protection Area Location Map (Map A)

Public Water Well System for PWS #299068.001 Alaska Airlines - Cordova



Legend

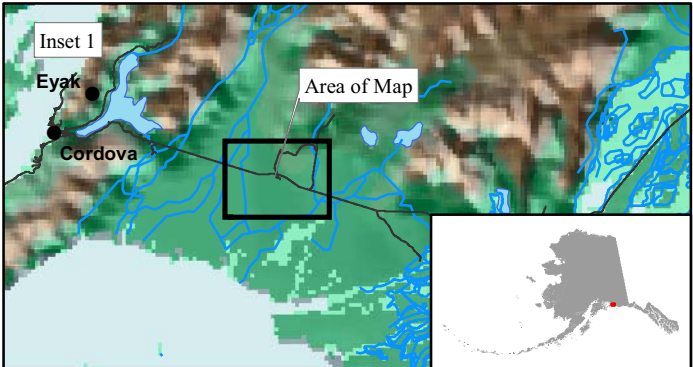
-  Class B Public Water System Well
- Groundwater Protection Zones**
-  Zone A Protection Area - Several Months Travel Time
-  Zone B Protection Area - 2 Years Travel Time

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

All other data:
Alaska Statewide Digital Mapping Initiative (SDMI)
United States Geological Survey (USGS)

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.



Alaska Airlines - Cordova
PWS 299068.001

Appendix A Map A

APPENDIX B

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Alaska Airlines - Cordova (Tables 1-4)

Table 1

**Contaminant Source Inventory for
ALASKA AIRLINES CORDOVA**

PWSID 299068.001

Contaminant Source Type	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID tag	Zone	Map Number	Comments
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02	A	C	1 assumed septic system
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	C	1 assumed heating oil tank
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	C	1 road
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-01	B	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-02	B	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-03	B	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-04	B	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-01	B	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-02	B	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-03	B	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-04	B	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-05	B	C	

Table 2

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
ALASKA AIRLINES CORDOVA
Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

PWSID 299068.001

<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 septic system
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	Low	C	1 road
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-01	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-02	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-03	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-04	B	Low	C	

Table 3

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
ALASKA AIRLINES CORDOVA
Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

PWSID 299068.001

<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 septic system
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	Low	C	1 road
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-01	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-02	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-03	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-04	B	Low	C	

Table 4

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
ALASKA AIRLINES CORDOVA
Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals*

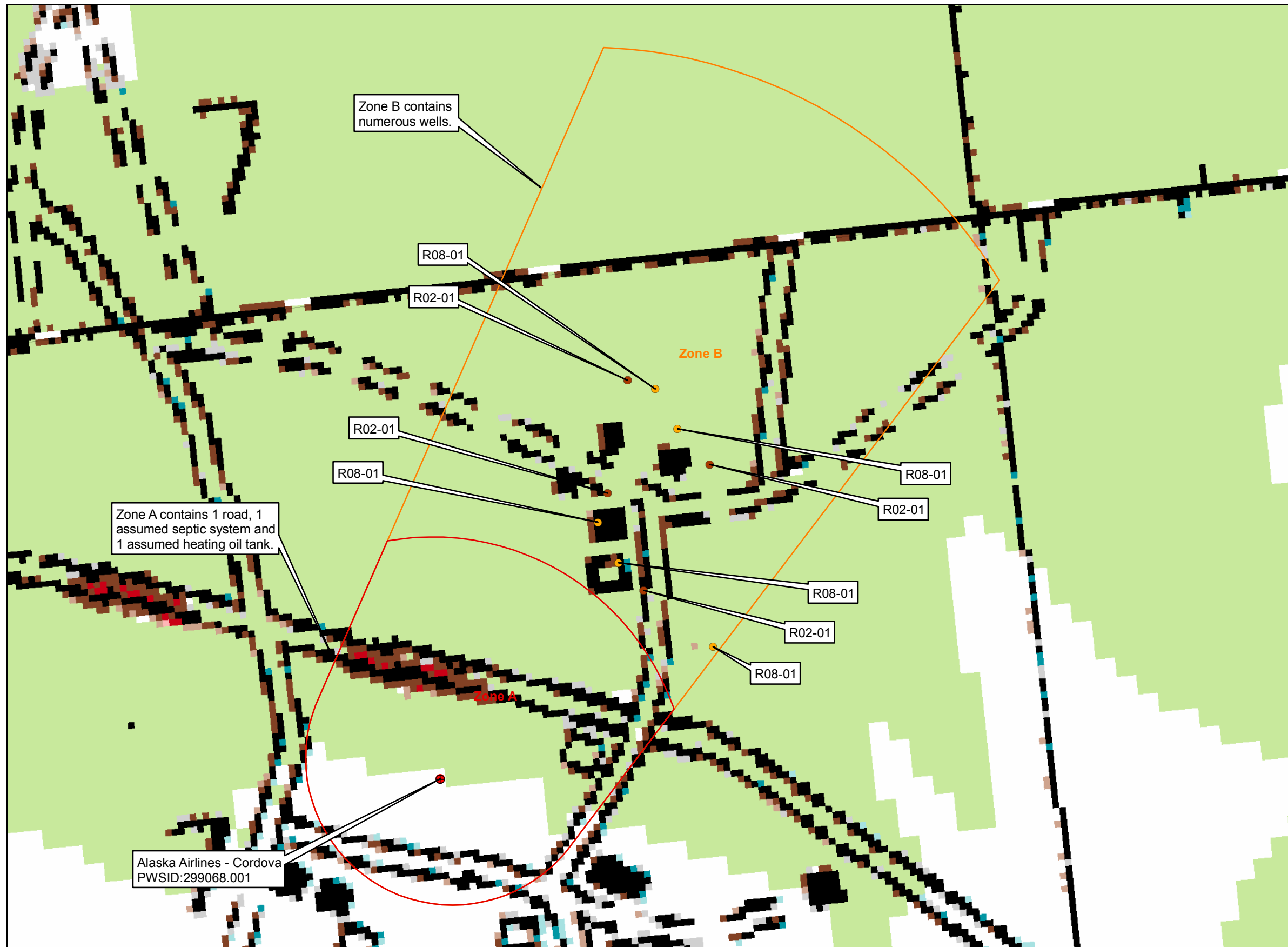
PWSID 299068.001

<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 septic system
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08	A	Medium	C	1 assumed heating oil tank
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20	A	Low	C	1 road
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-01	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-02	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-03	B	Low	C	
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R02-04	B	Low	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-01	B	Medium	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-02	B	Medium	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-03	B	Medium	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-04	B	Medium	C	
Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground)	R08	R08-05	B	Medium	C	

APPENDIX C

Alaska Airlines - Cordova Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Map C)

**Public Water Well System for PWS #299068.001 Alaska Airlines - Cordova
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
- Zone B Protection Area - 2 Years Travel Time
- Potential or Existing Contaminant Sources**
- Residential Septics (R02)
- Tanks, heating oil, residential (above ground) (R08)

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

All other data:
United States Geological Survey (USGS)

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.

