



Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and Vulnerability
Assessment for
Buffalo Center Drive-In
Drinking Water System,
Delta Junction area, Alaska
PWSID # 371702

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT #966

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

November 2003

Source Water Assessment for Buffalo Center Drive-In Drinking Water System Delta Junction area, Alaska PWSID# 371702

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The Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) 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 (ADEC), 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 Program Coordinator of DWPP, (907) 269-7521.

November 2003

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Source Water Assessment for Buffalo Center Drive-In Source of Public Drinking Water

Delta Junction area, Alaska

Drinking Water Protection Program Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public water system for Buffalo Center Drive-In is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well in the Delta Junction area, Alaska. The wellhead received a susceptibility rating of **Low** and the aquifer received a susceptibility rating of **Medium**. Combining these two ratings produces a **Low** rating for the natural susceptibility of the well. Identified potential and current sources of contaminants for Buffalo Center Drive-In public drinking water source include: roads, a septic system, the Trans-Alaska pipeline, and Allen Airfield. 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 source for Buffalo Center Drive-In 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 continuing efforts on the part of the system owner/operator to protect public health.

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 the owner/operator of Buffalo Center Drive-In, 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. Ecology & Environment, Inc. has been contracted to perform these assessments under the supervision of ADEC.

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.

BUFFALO CENTER DRIVE-IN PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

Buffalo Center Drive-In public water system is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well located in Delta Junction at mile 265.5 Richardson Highway (see Map 1 of Appendix A). Delta Junction is located at the junction of the Richardson and Alaska Highways, approximately 95 miles southeast of Fairbanks (see the inset of Map 1 in Appendix A for location). It is a second-class city with an estimated population of 856 residents (ADCED 2003).

The majority of residents in the Delta Junction area have individual wells and septic systems. Most residences are fully plumbed (ADCED 2003). Heating oil (stored in both aboveground and underground tanks) and propane are used for heating homes and buildings. Refuse is transported to the local landfill (ADCED 2003).

Groundwater in the Delta-Clearwater area is recharged by streams to the west, east, and south, including Jarvis Creek and the Delta River, and by precipitation. Discharge occurs in springs, creeks, and lakes in the northern and western parts of the Delta-Clearwater area (Wilcox 1980).

Most wells in the Delta Junction area are between 150 to 350 feet deep (ADCED 2003), and generally are completed in a confined aquifer composed of thick deposits unconsolidated alluvial sediments (silt, sand, and gravel), which overlie the crystalline bedrock. Permafrost is found discontinuously throughout the area; the water table generally lies below the permafrost layer (Wilcox 1980). The depth of the Buffalo Center Drive-In well is unknown.

The most recent Sanitary Survey (5/30/1991) for the water system indicates the land surface is appropriately sloped away from the well. Sloping of the ground surface around the well provides drainage of surface water away from the well casing. Also, the well is not grouted according to ADEC regulations. Proper grouting provides added protection against contaminants traveling along the well casing and into source waters. It generally is assumed that wells drilled prior to 1993 are not grouted, unless otherwise stated in the well log.

This system operates May 15 - September 30 and serves approximately 6 residents and 30 non-residents.

BUFFALO CENTER DRIVE-IN DRINKING WATER PROTECTION AREA (DWPA)

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 area that contributes water to the well, the groundwater recharge area. This area is designated as the drinking water protection area. Because releases of contaminants within the protection area are most likely to impact the drinking water well, this area will serve as the focus for voluntary protection efforts.

The protection areas established for wells by the ADEC are usually separated into four 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 input parameters describing the attributes of the aquifer in this calculation were derived from Freeze and Cherry (1979), Wilcox (1980), and from a review of well logs in the area found in the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and United States Geological Survey databases. Additional methods were considered to take into account any uncertainties in groundwater flow and aquifer characteristics to arrive at a meaningful protection area. (Please refer to the Guidance Manual for Class B Public Water Systems for additional information).

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 protection area zones for wells and the calculated time-of-travel for each:

Table 1. Definition of Zones

Zone	Definition
A	¼ the distance for the 2-yr. time-of-travel
B	Less than the 2 year time-of-travel
C	Less Than the 5 year time-of-travel
D	Less than the 10 year time-of-travel

The DWPA may be limited by its immediate watershed and therefore may not include all four zones (See Map 1 of Appendix A).

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 Buffalo Center Drive-In 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;
- Volatile organic chemicals

The sources are displayed on Map 2 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.

The time-of-travel for contaminants within the water varies and is dependent on the physical and chemical

characteristics of each contaminant. Bacteria and Viruses are only inventoried in Zones A and B because of their short life span. Only “Very High” and “High” rankings are inventoried within the outer Zone D due to the probability of contaminant dilution by the time the contaminants get to the well.

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 BUFFALO CENTER DRIVE-IN DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

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

- Natural susceptibility; and
- Contaminant risks.

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.

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

Susceptibility of the Wellhead (0 – 25 Points)
(Chart 1 of Appendix D)

+

Susceptibility of the Aquifer (0 – 25 Points)
(Chart 2 of Appendix D)

=

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

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

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

The well for Buffalo Center Drive-In is completed in a confined aquifer. Confined aquifers are somewhat protected from migration of water from the surface by an overlying low-permeability layer, such as a clay or till. However, contaminants at the surface have the potential to impact this aquifer adversely because wells penetrating the aquifer can act as conduits. Table 2 shows the Susceptibility scores and ratings for Buffalo Center Drive-In.

Table 2. Susceptibility

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	5	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	11	Medium
Natural Susceptibility	16	Low

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

Table 3. Contaminant Risks

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	12	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	13	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	24	Medium

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

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

Again, rankings are assigned according to a point score:

Overall Vulnerability Ratings	
80 to 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. Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five.

Table 4. Overall Vulnerability

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	30	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	30	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	40	Medium

Bacteria and Viruses

The contaminant risk for bacteria and viruses is Low, with the roads and septic system representing the greatest risk to the drinking water well (see Chart 3 – Contaminant Risks for Bacteria and Viruses in Appendix D).

Residents and businesses in the area generally dispose of wastewater in private septic systems. Although this report does not address such systems (unless their location is known), they can pose a risk of

bacteria/virus and nitrate/nitrite contamination to drinking water sources. Proper design and maintenance of septic systems is the best safeguard against such contamination.

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

Nitrates and Nitrites

The contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites is Low, with the roads and septic system representing the highest risk to this source of public drinking water (see Chart 5 - Contaminant Risks for Nitrates and/or Nitrites in Appendix D). Nitrates are very mobile, moving at approximately the same rate as water.

The last five years’ sampling history for Buffalo Center Drive-In public water source indicates the most recent concentration detected was 0.130 mg/L on 6/14/2002, which represents 1.3% of the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). While nitrates and nitrites can occur naturally in groundwater, a level of 20% of the MCL or more is considered to be due to manmade sources. Water with levels of nitrates and nitrites below 100% of the MCL is considered safe to drink by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA 2003). After combining the contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites with the natural susceptibility of the well, the overall vulnerability of the well to contamination by nitrates and nitrites is Low.

Volatile Organic Chemicals

The contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals is Medium, with the airfield and the pipeline representing the highest risk for volatile organic chemicals (see Chart 7 – Contaminant Risks for Volatile Organic Chemicals in Appendix D).

Residents in the area typically heat their homes with various types of on-site fuel sources, including propane and heating oil stored in aboveground or underground storage tanks. Although this report does not address heating oil tanks (unless their location is known), they can pose a risk of volatile organic chemical contamination to drinking water sources. The most common causes of fuel leaks of these heating oil systems are overfilling the tank, ruptured fuel lines, leaking storage tanks, damaged or faulty valves and vandalism. Secondary containment around the tank and regular system maintenance can help prevent many of these harmful fuel leaks and help protect the drinking water supply.

Class B water systems generally are not required to test for volatile organic chemicals. After combining the potential contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals with the natural susceptibility of the well, the overall vulnerability of the well to contamination by volatile organic chemicals is Medium.

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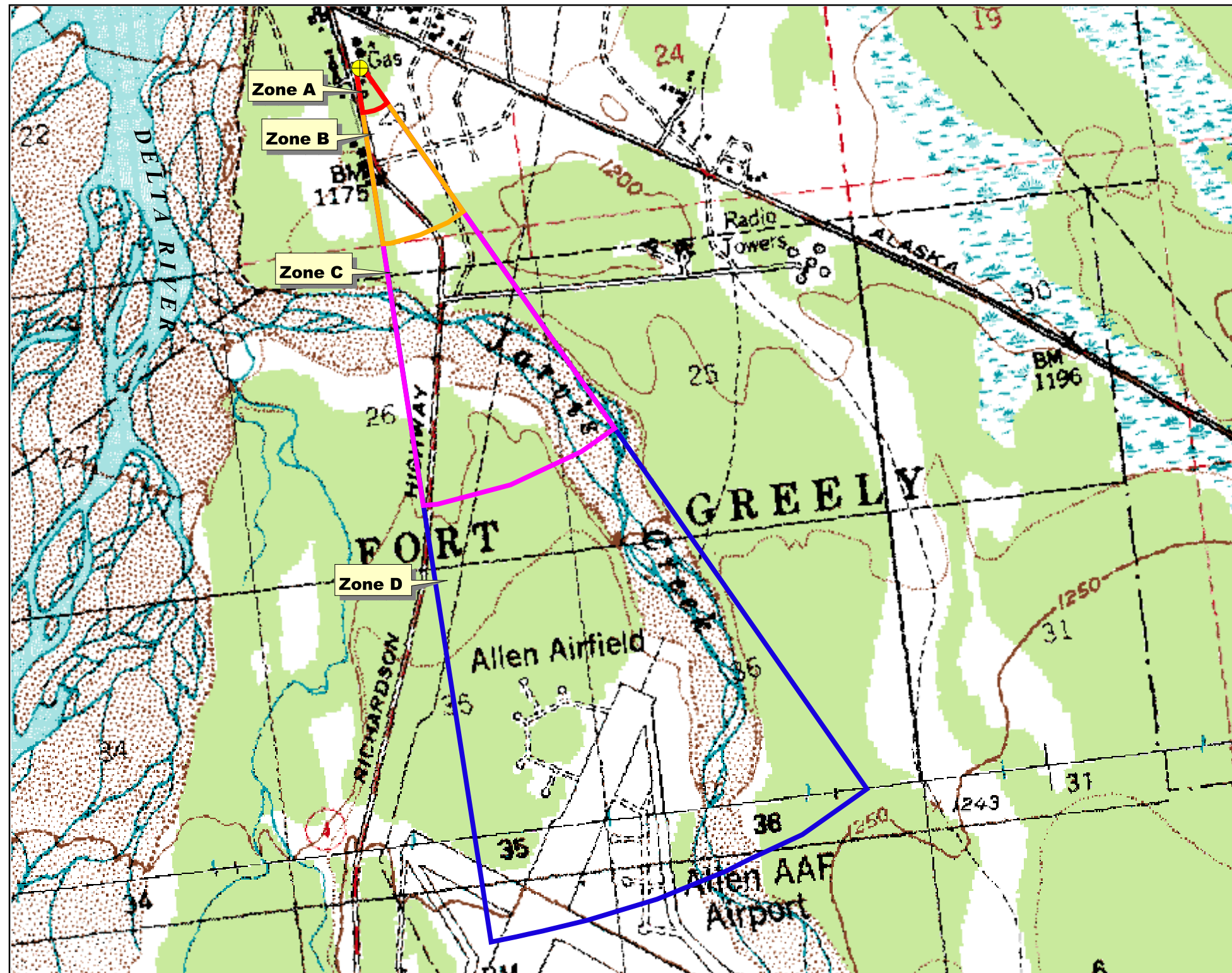
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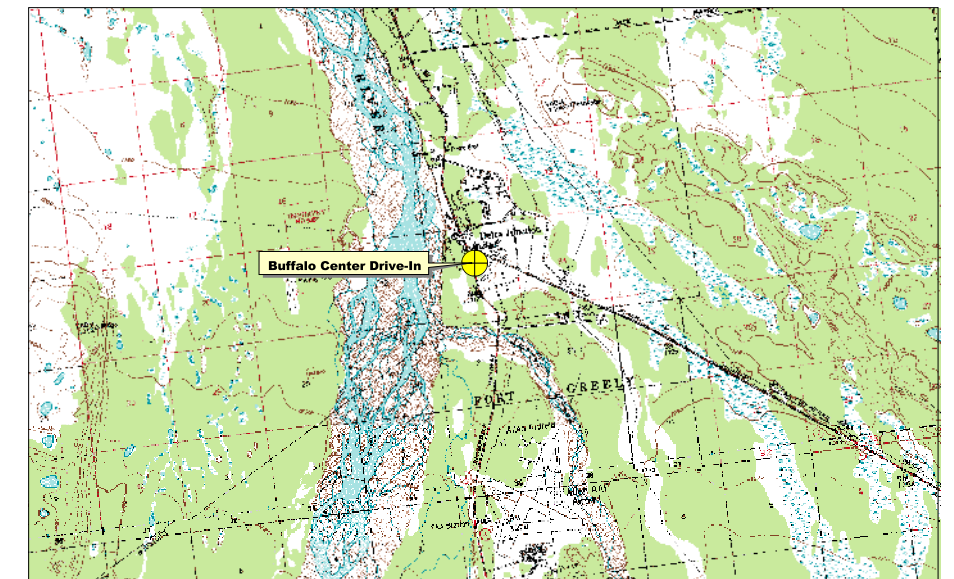
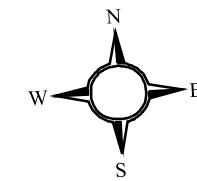
APPENDIX A

Buffalo Center Drive-In Drinking Water Protection Area Location Map (Map 1)

Drinking Water Protection Area for Buffalo Center Drive-In



- ⊕ Buffalo Center Drive-In Well
- ▭ Zone A (Few Months Travel Time)
- ▭ Zone B (Less Than 2 Years Travel Time)
- ▭ Zone C (Less Than 5 Years Travel Time)
- ▭ Zone D (Less Than 10 Years Travel Time)



APPENDIX B

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Buffalo Center Drive-In (Tables 1-4)

Table 1

**Contaminant Source Inventory for
Buffalo Center Drive-In**

PWSID 371702.001

Contaminant Source Type	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID tag	Zone	Map Number	Comments
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R2-1	A	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	B	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-2	B	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-3	B	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-4	C	2	
Pipelines (oil and gas)	X28	X28-1	C	2	Trans-Alaska Pipeline
Airports	X14	X14-1	D	2	Allen Airfield, Fort Greely

Table 2

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Buffalo Center Drive-In
Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

PWSID 371702.001

<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	R2-1	A	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-2	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-3	B	Low	2	

Table 3

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Buffalo Center Drive-In
Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

PWSID 371702.001

<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	R2-1	A	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-2	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-3	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-4	C	Low	2	

Table 4

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Buffalo Center Drive-In
Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals*

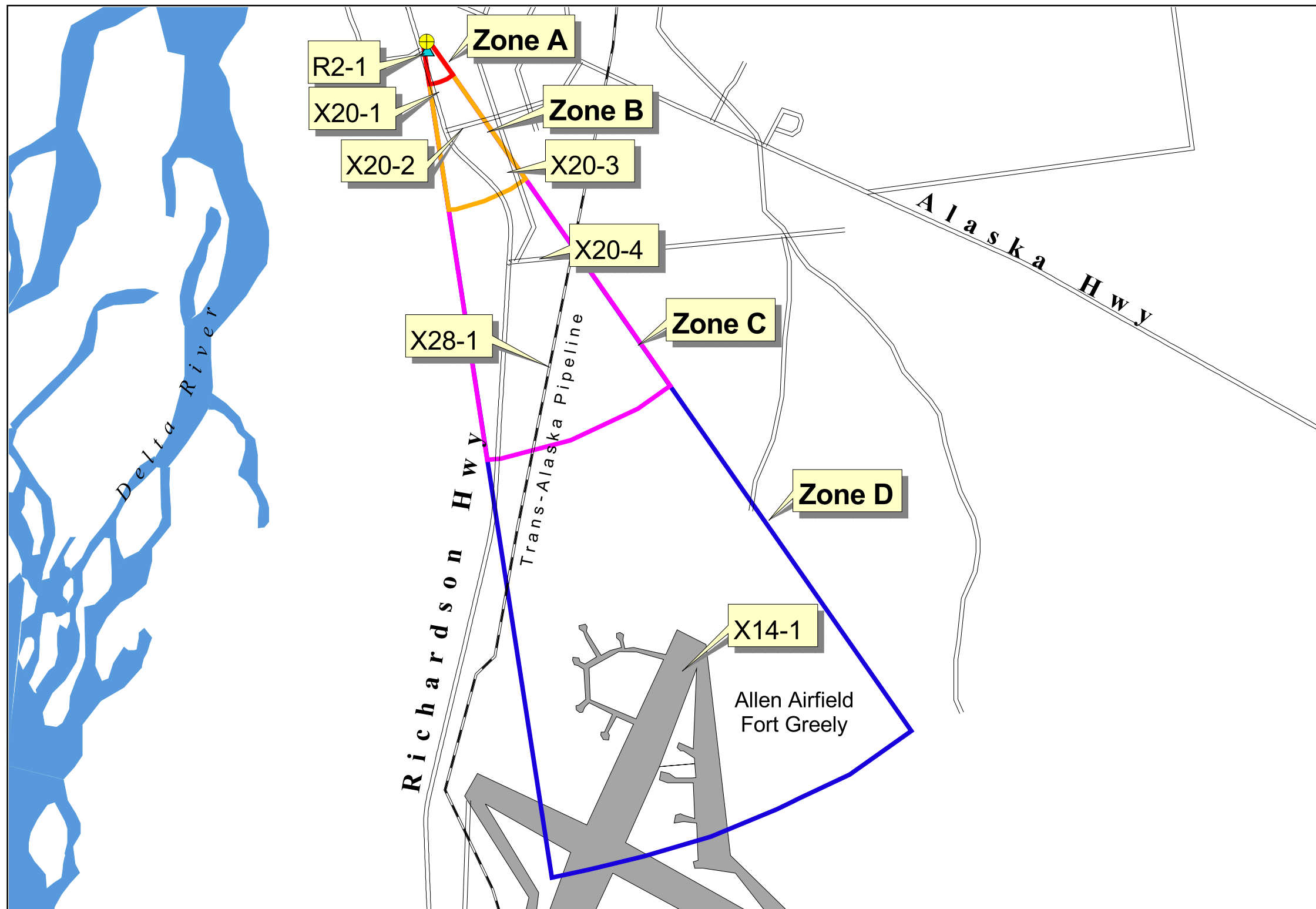
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<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Septic systems (serves one single-family home)	R02	R2-1	A	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-2	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-3	B	Low	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-4	C	Low	2	
Pipelines (oil and gas)	X28	X28-1	C	Medium	2	Trans-Alaska Pipeline
Airports	X14	X14-1	D	High	2	Allen Airfield, Fort Greely

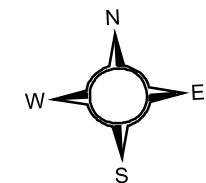
APPENDIX C

Buffalo Center Drive-In Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Map 2)

Drinking Water Protection Area For Buffalo Center Drive-In and Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination



- Buffalo Center Drive-In Well
- Septic System- R2
- Pipeline- X28
- Roads- X20
- Airport- X14
- Zone A (Few Months Travel Time)
- Zone B (Less Than 2 Years Travel Time)
- Zone C (Less Than 5 Years Travel Time)
- Zone D (Less Than 10 Years Travel Time)



0.5 0 0.5 1 1.5 Miles

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Map 2

APPENDIX D

Vulnerability Analysis for Buffalo Center Drive-In Public Drinking Water Source (Charts 1-8)

Chart 1. Susceptibility of the wellhead - Buffalo Center Drive-In

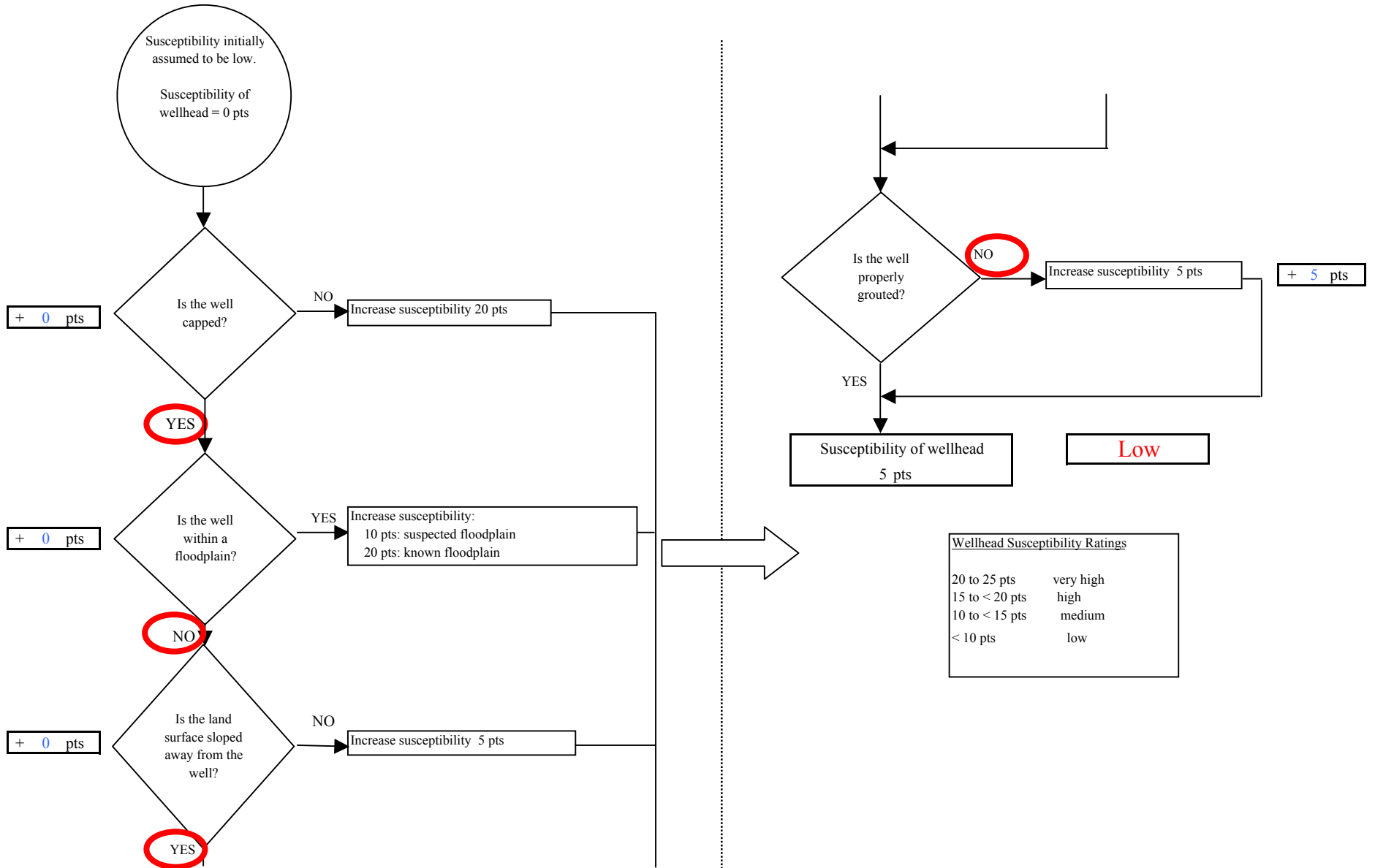


Chart 2. Susceptibility of the aquifer - Buffalo Center Drive-In

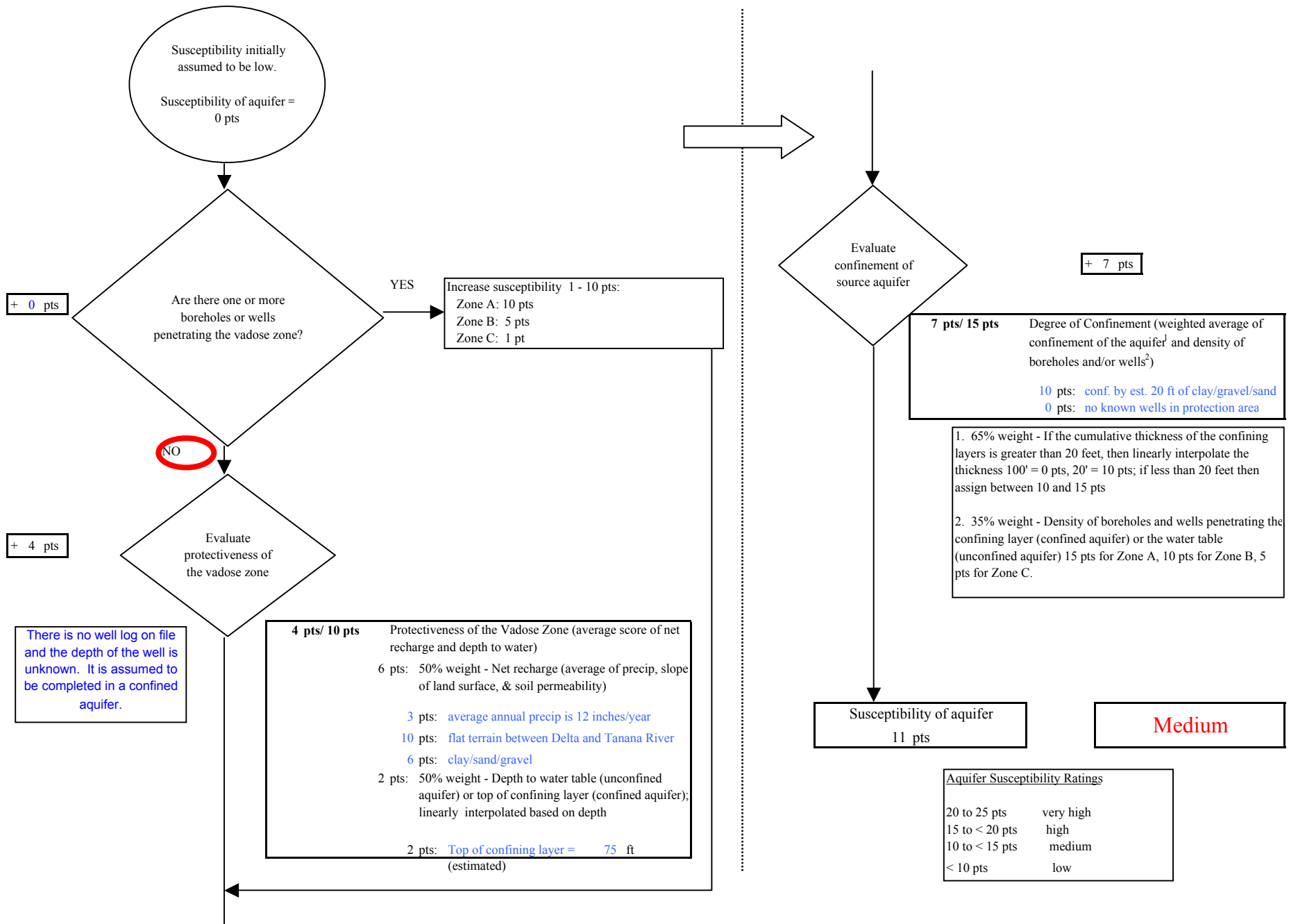
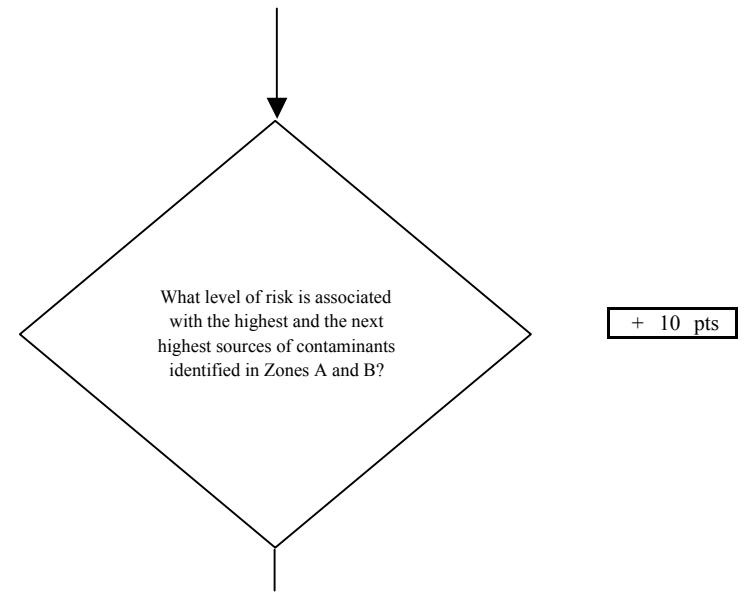
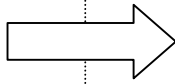
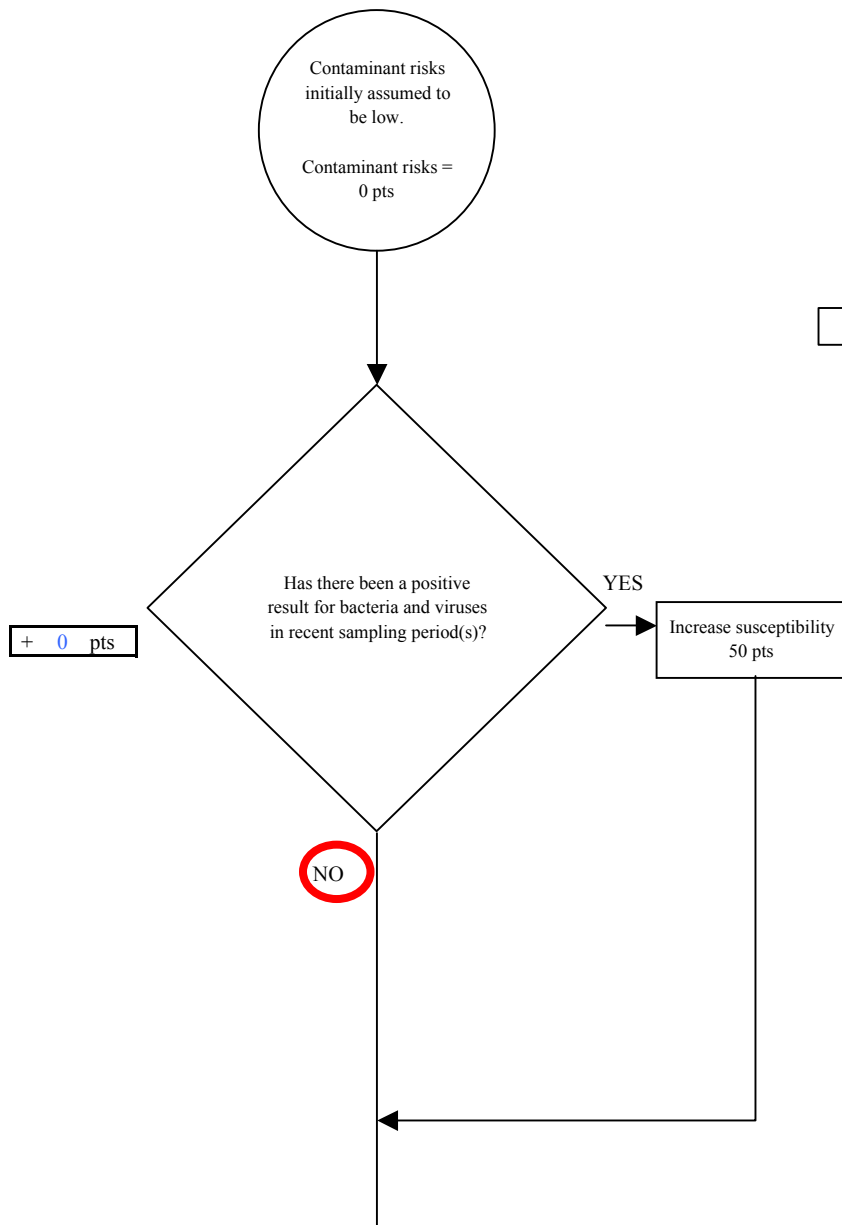


Chart 3. Contaminant risks for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Bacteria & Viruses



Risk Rankings for Contaminant Sources Identified in Zones A and B

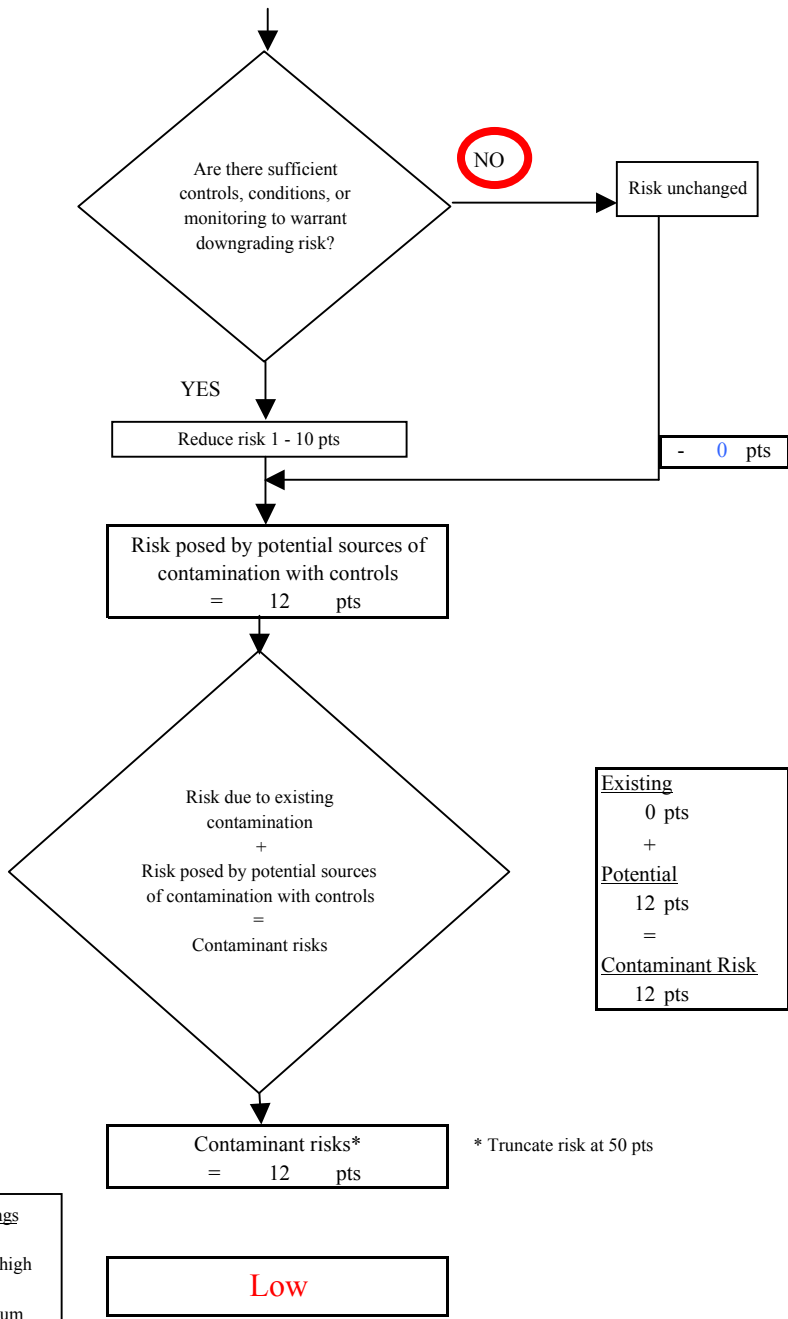
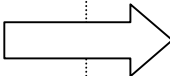
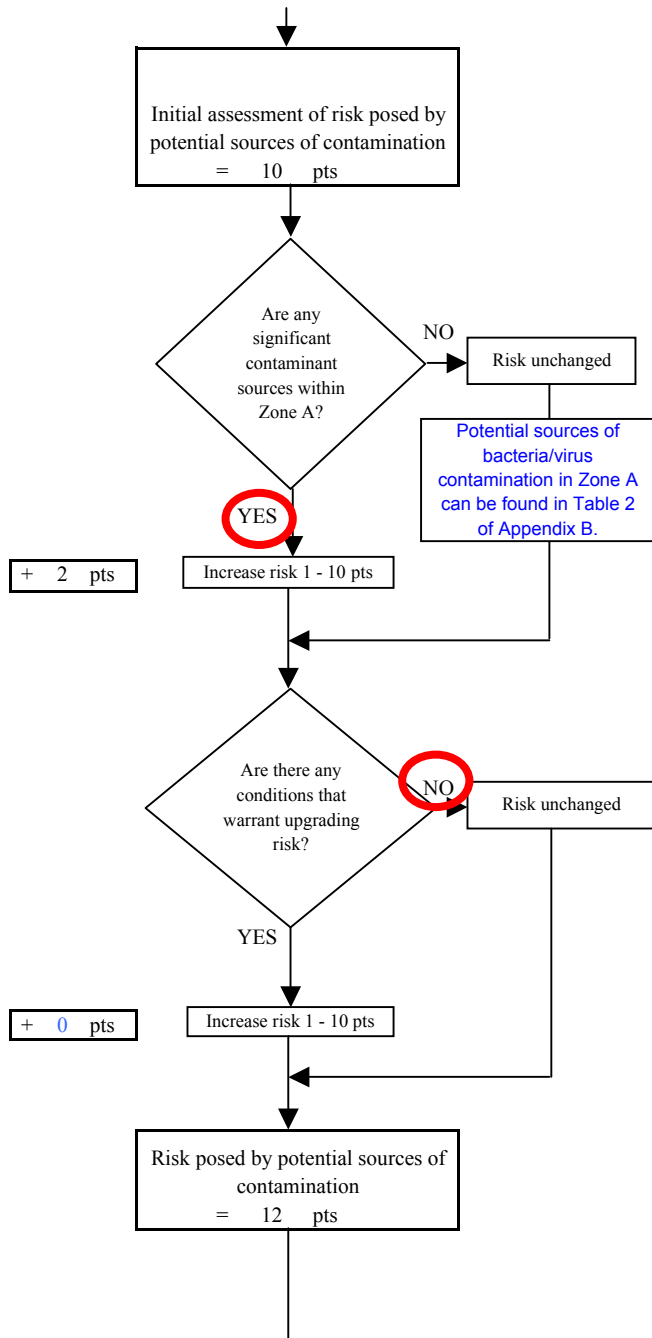
	Zone A	Zone B	Total
Very High(s)	0	0	0
High(s)	0	0	0
Medium(s)	0	0	0
Low(s)	1	1	2

	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 3. Contaminant risks for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Bacteria & Viruses



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

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

* Truncate risk at 50 pts

Chart 4. Vulnerability analysis for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Bacteria & Viruses

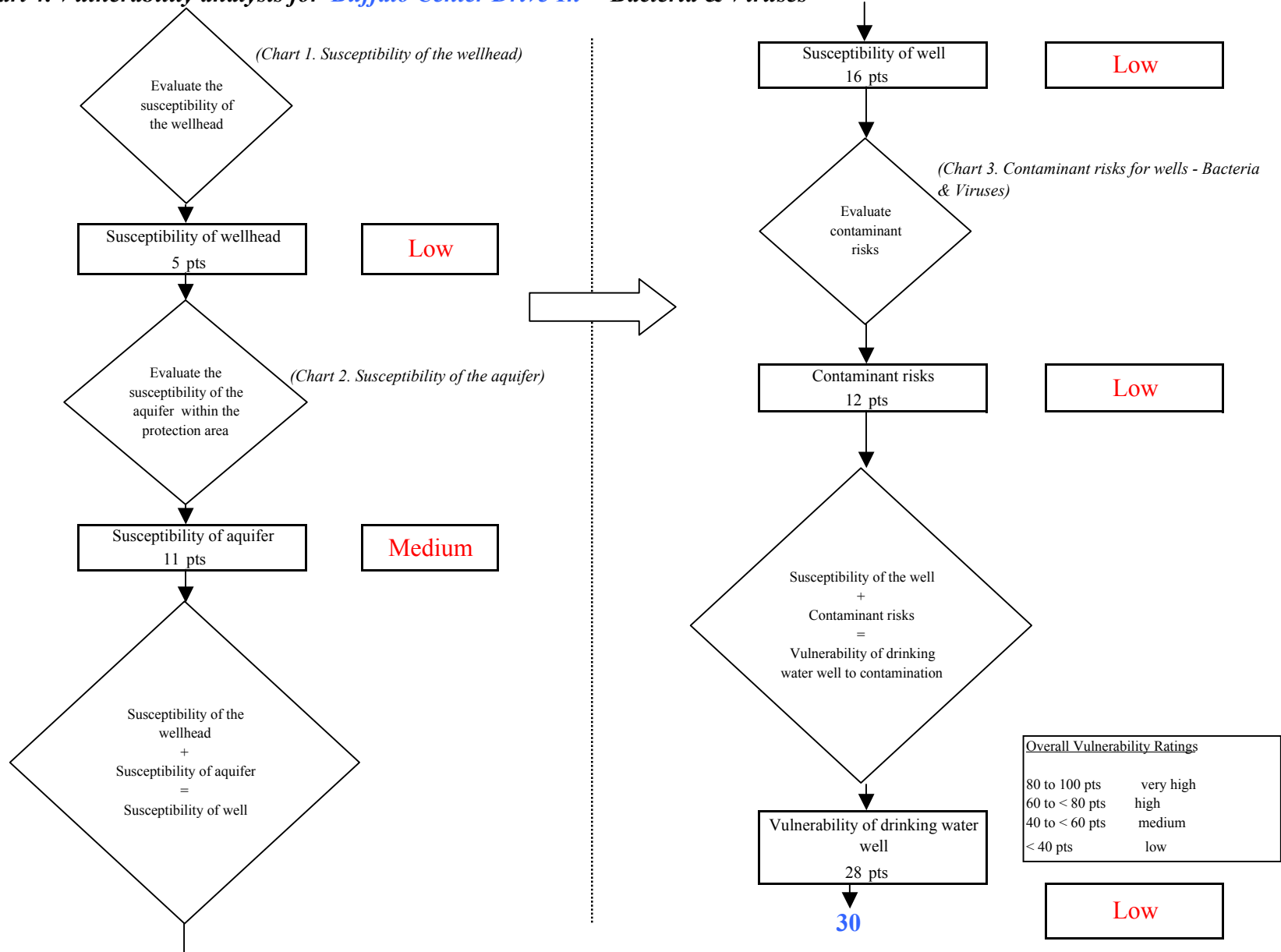


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for *Buffalo Center Drive-In* - Nitrates and Nitrites

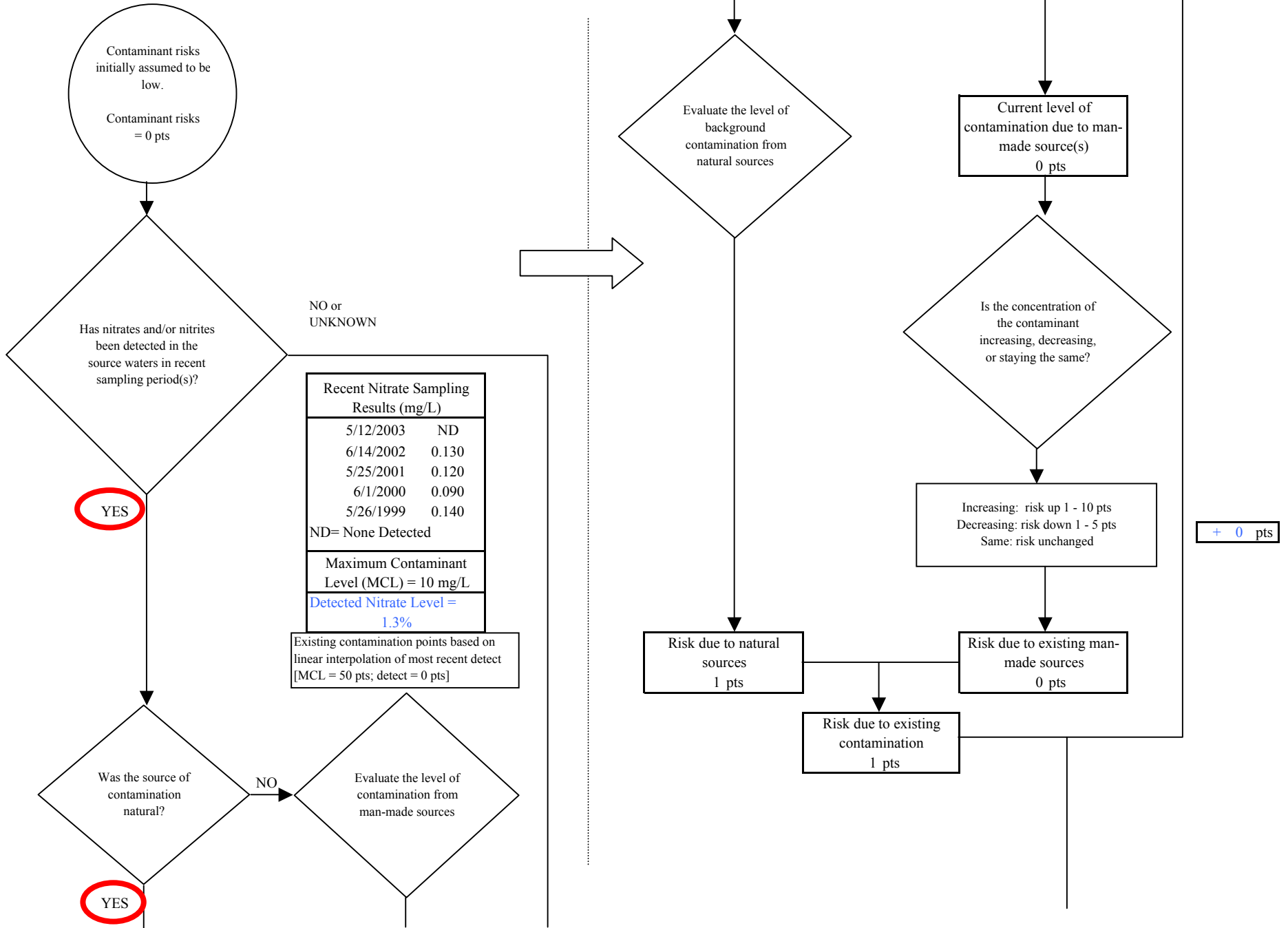
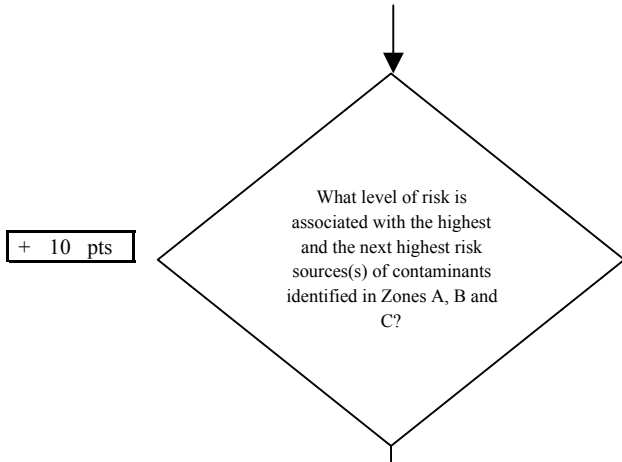


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Nitrates and Nitrites



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	1	2

	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.

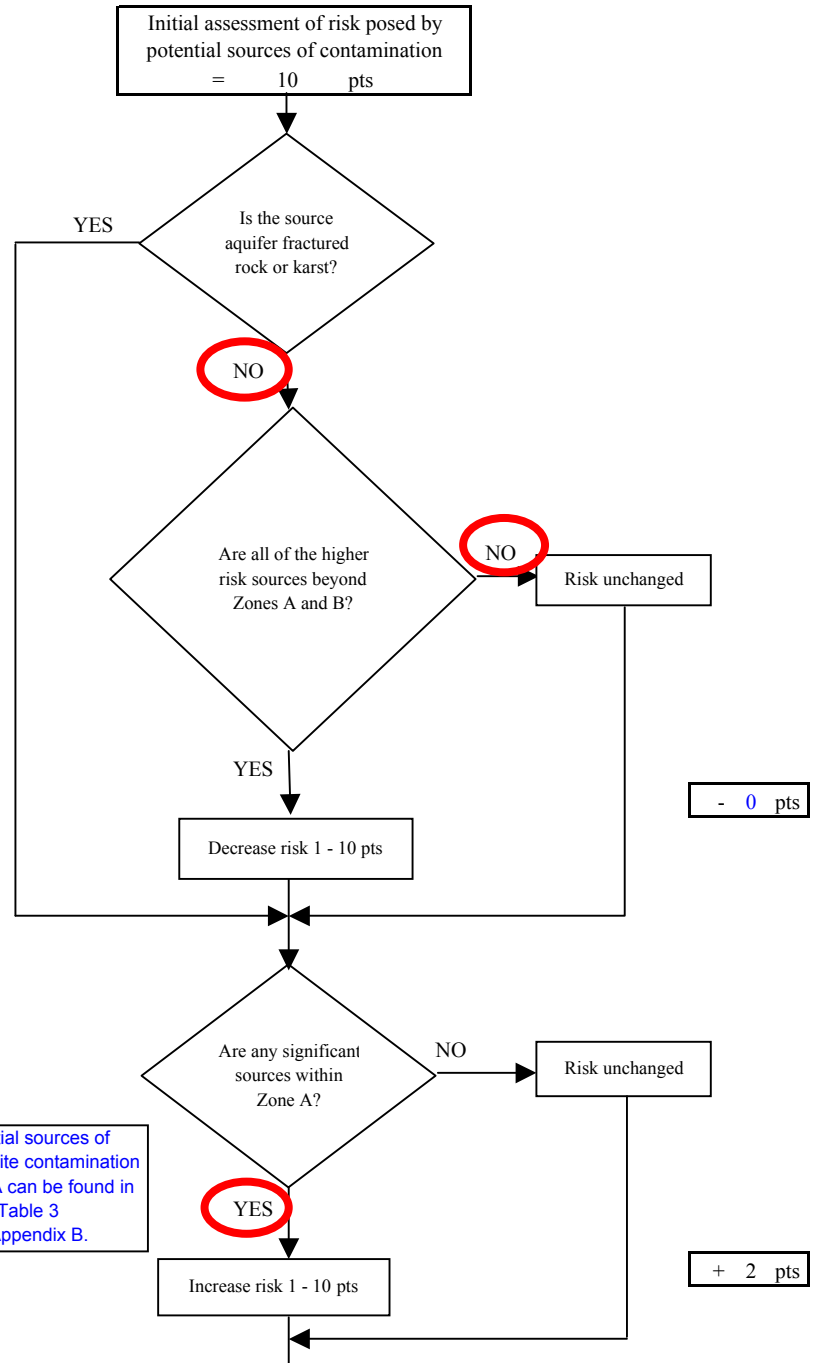


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Nitrates and Nitrites

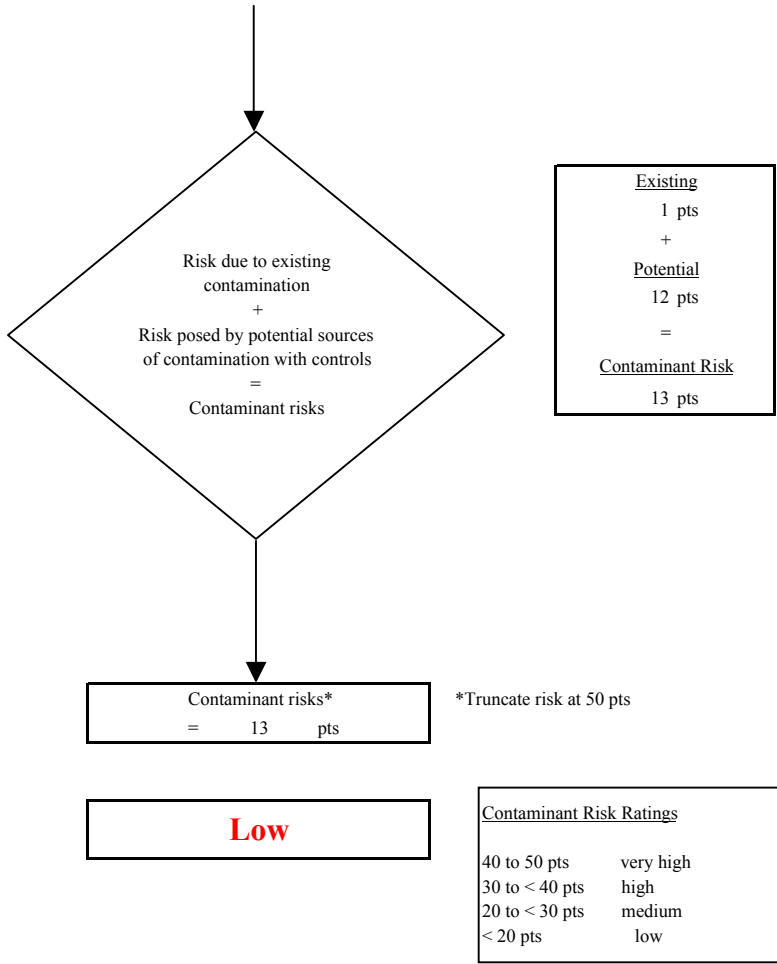
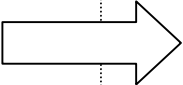
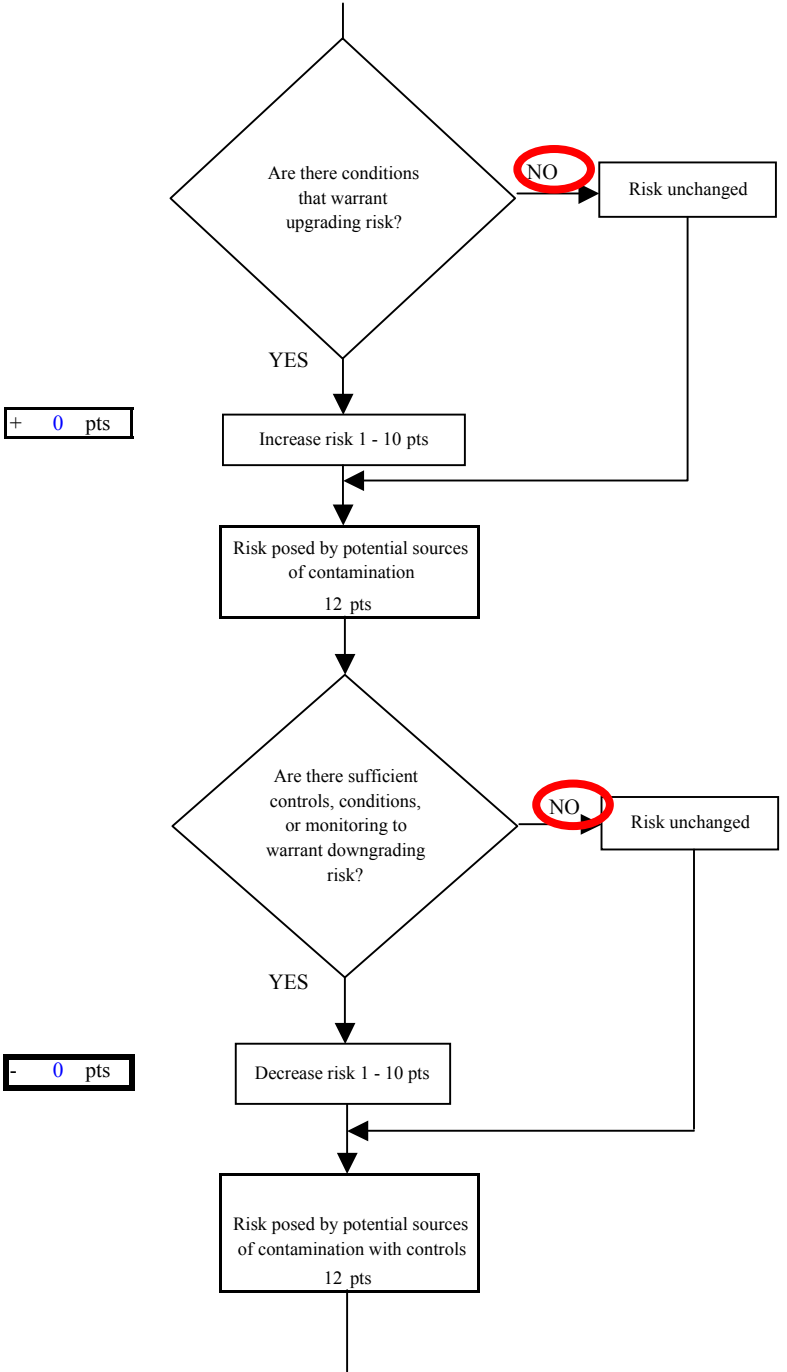


Chart 6. Vulnerability analysis for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Nitrates and Nitrites

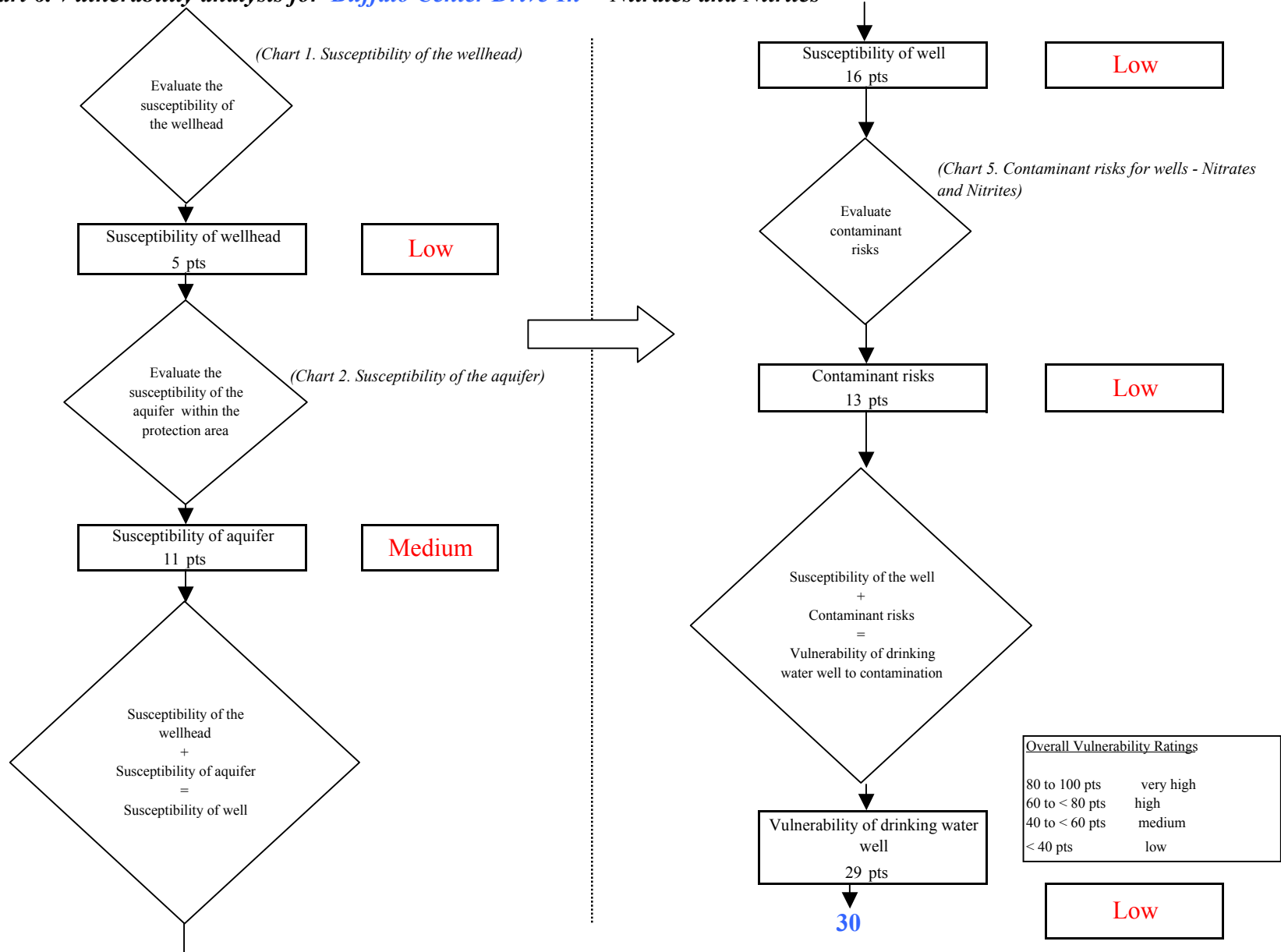


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Volatile Organic Chemicals

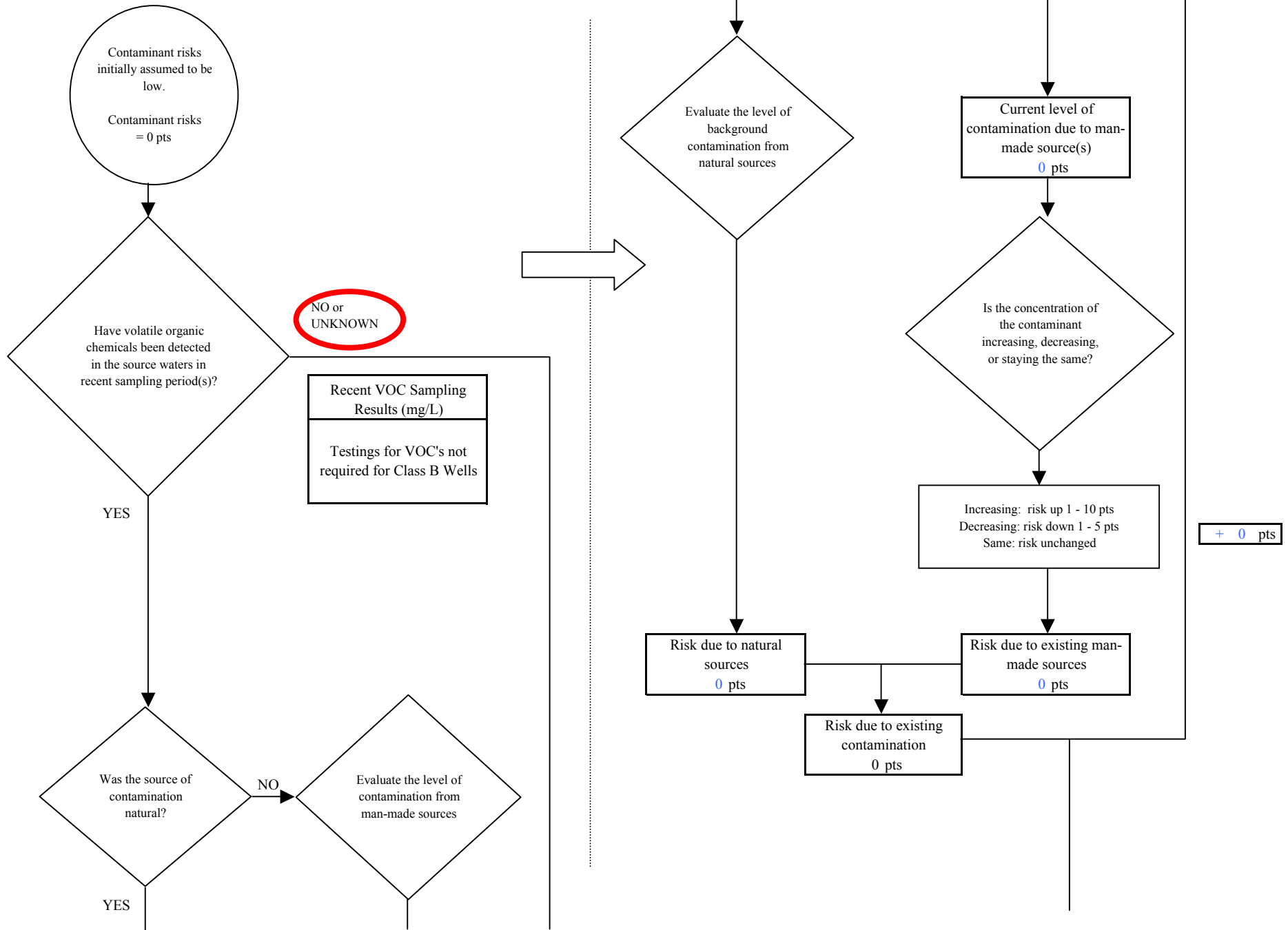
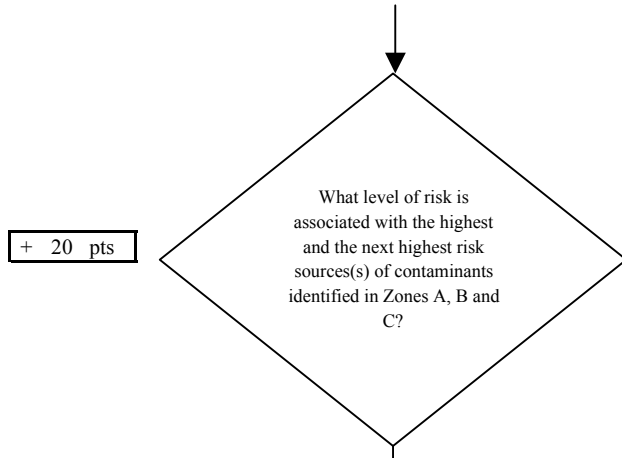


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Volatile Organic Chemicals



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	1	1
Low(s)	1	1	2

	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 20

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.

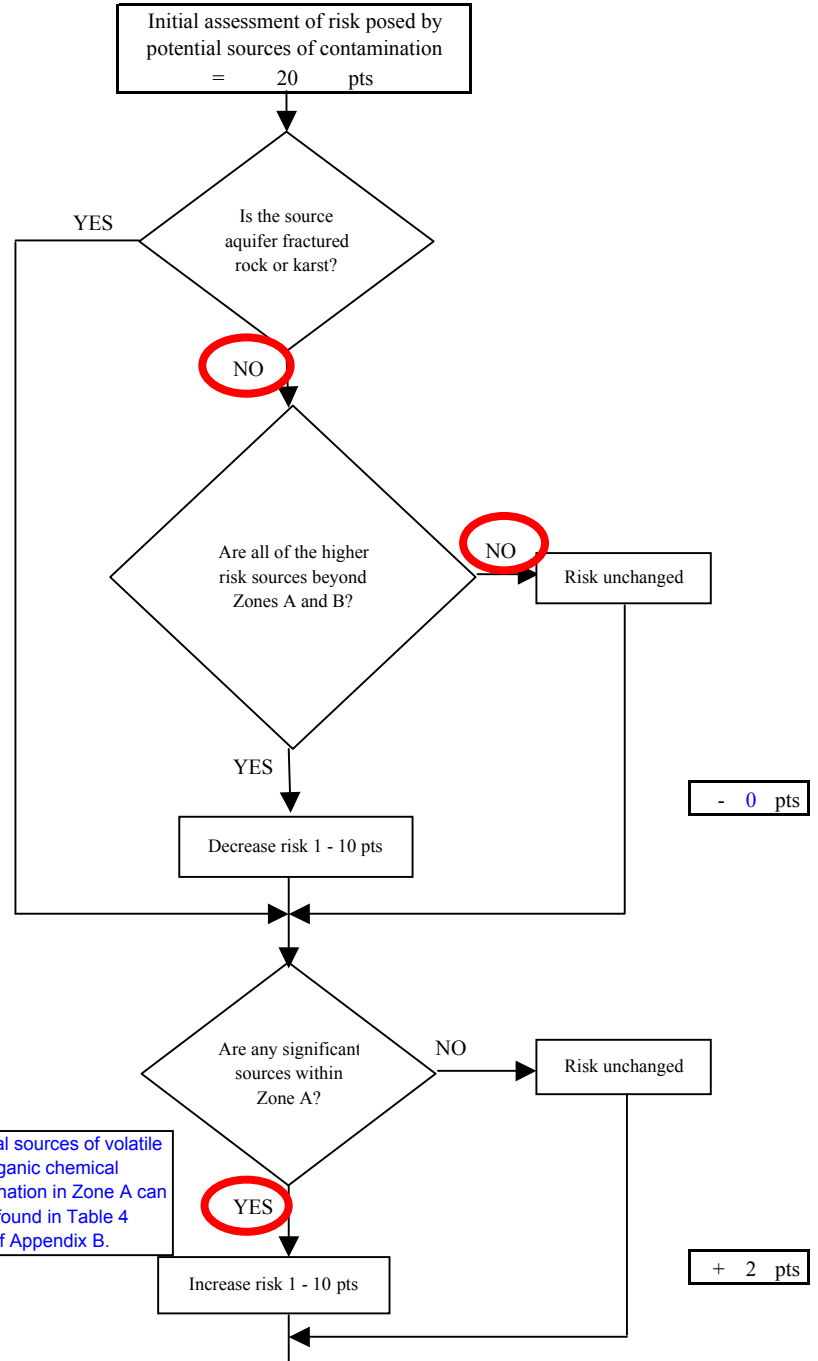


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Volatile Organic Chemicals

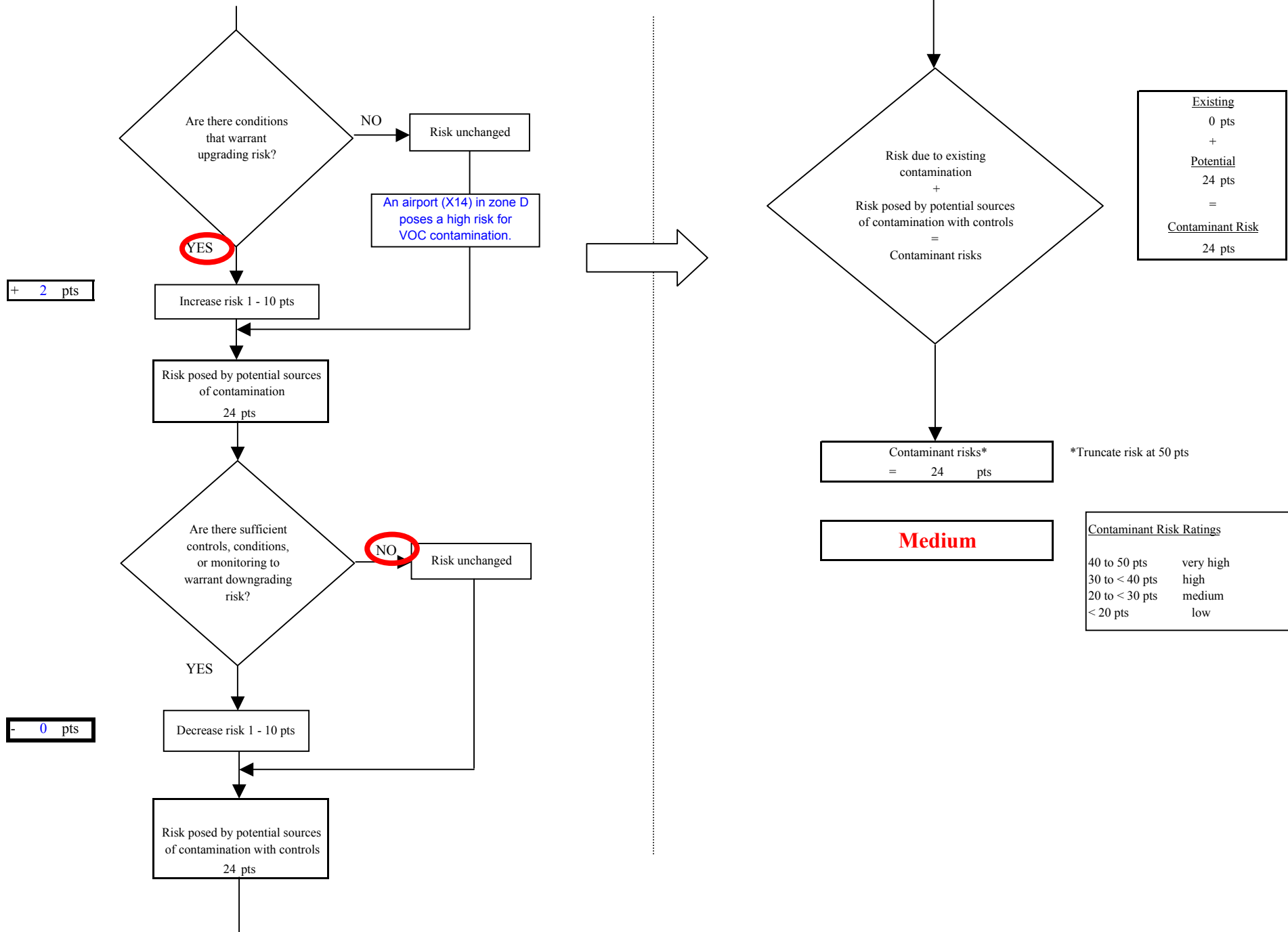


Chart 8. Vulnerability analysis for Buffalo Center Drive-In - Volatile Organic Chemicals

