Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and Vulnerability Assessment for Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 Public Drinking Water System, McCarthy Area, Alaska PWSID # 292241.003

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION REPORT 1768

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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Drinking Water Protection
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public water system for Kennicott Glacier Lodge is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of two wells and a surface water intake located at the historic Kennicott Millsite, near McCarthy, Alaska. This Source Water Assessment has been prepared for Well #2. 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. The only identified potential and existing source of contaminants for Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 public drinking water source is Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. This identified potential and existing source of contamination is considered as a source of bacteria and viruses, as well as nitrates and/or nitrites. Overall, Well #2 at Kennicott Glacier Lodge received a vulnerability rating of **High** for bacteria and viruses, **Medium** for nitrates and nitrites, and **Low** 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 Kennicott Glacier Lodge to protect public health.

KENNICOTT GLACIER LODGE - WELL #2 PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

The Kennicott Glacier Lodge public water system is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of two wells and a surface water intake located at the historic Kennicott Millsite, 4.5 miles north of McCarthy, on the Kennicott Glacier, Alaska (see Map A in Appendix A). This Source Water Assessment has been prepared for Well #2. The community of McCarthy (population 54) lies at the end of the Edgerton Highway, in the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The area receives 12 inches of precipitation annually, and temperatures range from winter lows of -58 degrees Fahrenheit to summer highs of 91 degrees Fahrenheit (ADCCED, 2008).

There is no water or sewage infrastructure in the McCarthy area. Water is generally drawn by hand from a clear spring, and outhouses are prevalent, although some residences do have septic systems. There is no central electric system, and electricity is provided by private generators. Only one road, the Edgerton Highway, leads to McCarthy, and the nearest emergency services are located in Chitina, 12 miles to the southwest (ADCCED, 2008).

According to the well log (04/09/1976), Well #2 at Kennicott Glacier Lodge extends approximately 105 feet below the ground surface and is completed in an unconfined aquifer.

This system operates seasonally from mid-May to mid-September and serves fifteen residents and up to one hundred and fifty non-residents through one service connection.

KENNICOTT GLACIER LODGE - WELL #2 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 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 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 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 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 3 in Appendix B contain the ranking of potential and existing sources of contamination with respect to bacteria and viruses, and nitrates and/or nitrites.

VULNERABILITY OF KENNICOTT GLACIER LODGE - WELL #2 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.

Susceptibility of the Wellhead (0-25 Points)
+
Susceptibility of the Aquifer (0-25 Points)
=
Natural Susceptibility of the Well (0-50 Points)

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 Well #2 wellhead at the Kennicott Glacier Lodge received a **Low** susceptibility rating. The most recent sanitary survey (06/11/2003) indicates that a sanitary seal is installed on the well, the land surface is sloped away from the well, and the well is 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.

Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 draws water from an unconfined aquifer bored into fractured rock. It received a **Medium** susceptibility rating because of its unconfined nature. 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. Deeper aquifers reduce this risk as they make it more difficult for contaminants to reach the water table. Likewise, the absence of other wells penetrating the vadose zone reduces the possibility of contaminants traveling down to the shared aquifer with precipitation and runoff.

Table 2 summarizes the Susceptibility scores and ratings for the Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 system.

Table 2. Susceptibility

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	0	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	14	Medium
Natural Susceptibility	14	Low

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 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 system.

Table 3. Contaminant Risks

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	50	Very High
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	34	High
Volatile Organic Chemicals	0	Low

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

Natural Susceptibility (0-50 Points)
+
Contaminant Risks (0-50 Points)
=
Vulnerability of the Drinking Water Source to Contamination (0-100 Points)

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 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 system. Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five.

Table 4. Overall Vulnerability

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	65	High
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	50	Medium
Volatile Organic Chemicals	15	Low

Bacteria and Viruses

The contaminant risk to the drinking water well for bacteria and viruses is determined to be **Very High**, with risk resulting primarily from positive coliform sampling results. A park (Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve) further contributes 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 on two separate occasions during the last five years of sampling at Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2. Positive samples were detected 06/22/2004 and 06/30/2004 (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 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 is determined to be **High**, with risk resulting primarily from positive nitrate/nitrite sampling results. A park (Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve) further contributes to the risk to the drinking water well.

The sampling history for Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 indicates that nitrates and nitrites have been detected repeatedly within the last five years, with the highest concentration of 1.79 mg/L of nitrates detected on 05/27/2003 (data reviewed in April, 2008).

After combining the contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites with the natural susceptibility of the well, the overall vulnerability of the well to contamination is **Medium**.

Volatile Organic Chemicals

The contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals is determined to be **Low**, with no known contaminants contributing to the risk to the drinking water well.

The drinking water at Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 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 **Low**.

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 Kennicott Glacier 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 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 drinking water source.

REFERENCES

Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (ADCCED), Accessed 2008 [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

Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2
Drinking Water Protection Area Location Map
(Map A)

Public Water Well System for PWS #292241.003 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2

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

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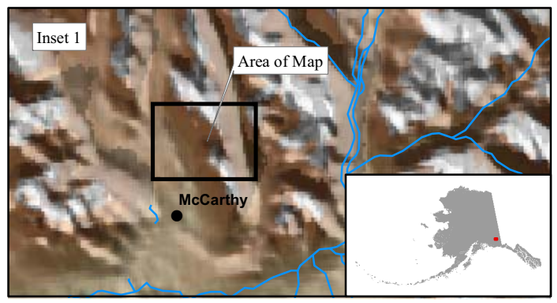

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Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2
PWS 292241.003

Appendix A Map A

APPENDIX B

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2 (Tables 1-3)

Table 1

Contaminant Source Inventory for

Kennicott Glacier Lodge

PWSID 292241.003

Contaminant Source Type	*Contaminant Source ID*	*CS ID tag*	*Zone*	*Map Number*	*Comments*
Municipal or city parks (with green areas)	X04	X04	A	C	Wrangell - St Elias National Park

Table 2

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Kennicott Glacier Lodge Sources of Bacteria and Viruses

PWSID 292241.003

Contaminant Source Type	*Contaminant Source ID*	*CS ID tag*	*Zone*	*Risk Ranking for Analysis*	*Map Number*	*Comments*
Municipal or city parks (with green areas)	X04	X04	A	Medium	C	Wrangell - St Elias National Park

Table 3

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Kennicott Glacier Lodge Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites

PWSID 292241.003

Contaminant Source Type	*Contaminant Source ID*	*CS ID tag*	*Zone*	*Risk Ranking for Analysis*	*Map Number*	*Comments*
Municipal or city parks (with green areas)	X04	X04	A	Medium	C	Wrangell - St Elias National Park

APPENDIX C

Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2
Drinking Water Protection Area and
Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources
(Map C)

Public Water Well System for PWS # 292241.003 Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2
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

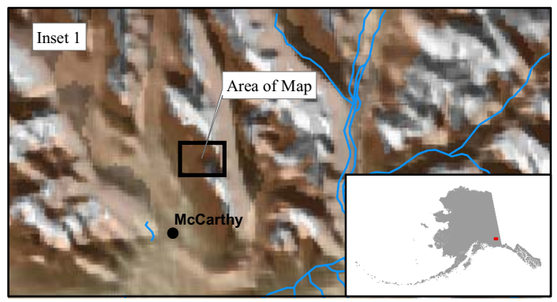
Zone B Protection Area - 2 Years Travel Time

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.



N
W E
S

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Kennicott Glacier Lodge - Well #2
PWS 292241.003

Appendix C Map C