Source Water Assessment:

Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and Vulnerability Assessment for Silver Fox Inn Drinking Water Well, Wasilla, Alaska

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT 78

October 2001

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By Shannon & Wilson, Inc.

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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION: OCTOBER 2001 CONTENTS

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By Shannon & Wilson, Inc.

Drinking Water Protection Program Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Silver Fox Inn well is a Class B drinking water source consisting of one well. The well is located in the Meadow Creek watershed, at approximately Mile 50 of the Parks Highway, west of Wasilla, Alaska. Identified potential and current sources of contaminants for Silver Fox Inn include: a high-capacity septic system, a highway and residential road, a dog kennel, residential septic systems, and approximately 5 acres of residential area. These identified potential and existing sources of contamination are considered sources of bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites, and volatile organic chemicals. Overall, Silver Fox Inn public water source received vulnerability ratings of **High** for bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites, and **Low** for volatile organic chemicals.

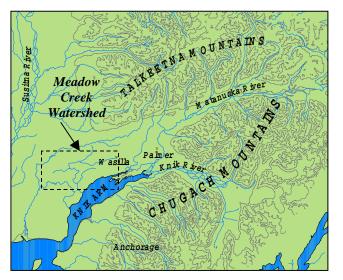


Figure 1. Index Map showing the location of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley and the Meadow Creek Watershed.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this environmental assessment is to provide public water system owners/operators, communities, and local governments with information they can use to preserve the quality of Alaska's public drinking water supplies. This assessment was completed for the Silver Fox Inn source of public drinking water. This source consists of one well in the Meadow Creek Watershed (see Figure 1). This assessment, known under the Alaska Drinking Water Protection Program as the Source Water Assessment, has combined a review of the natural hydrogeologic sensitivity with potential and existing contaminant risks to arrive at an overall vulnerability of the drinking water source to contamination. This assessment has been completed as a basis for local voluntary protection efforts and to assist agencies in their efforts to reduce risk to this public drinking water supply.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MEADOW CREEK - AREA, ALASKA

Location

The Meadow Creek watershed, located in southcentral Alaska, lies within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The Borough encompasses 24,694 square miles and supports a population in 2000 of 59,322. The Borough is contained within the watersheds of the Matanuska and Susitna Rivers which flow from the glacier melt waters in the Alaska Range, Talkeetna Mountains, and the Chugach Mountains to tidewater in the Knik Arm of Upper Cook Inlet (Jokela, Munter and Evans, 1991) (Figure 1). The area between the Matanuska and Susitna Valley is commonly referred to as the Mat-Su Valley. The Meadow Creek watershed contains 115 lakes, including Big Lake, and extends from an area northwest of Wasilla to the west end of Big Lake (Jokela, Munter and Evans, 1991), as shown in Figure 1.

The Borough's close proximity to Anchorage and its abundance of surface-water resources has helped contribute to rapid growth over the last two decades. The population has tripled since 1980. As of 1998, approximately 9% of the state's population resided in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The projected growth rate is expected to be 3.3% per year, three times higher then the state rate. At this rate, the Borough will have approximately 13% of the states population by 2018 (*ADOL*, 1999).

Climate

The Meadow Creek-area climate is somewhat transitional in that it does not experience large daily and annual temperature fluctuations like those experienced in the interior of Alaska nor does it experience high amounts of precipitation typified by gulf coast regions.

The mean daily temperature ranges from 69.4 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer months to 13.8 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter months. The annual precipitation in the Meadow Creek-area is approximately 20 inches per year and total snow is around 59 inches per year. The average snow depth during snowy months is 6.4 inches (*Western Regional Climate Center*, 2000). Precipitation generally increases inland toward the Talkeetna Mountains where annual precipitation may exceed 60 inches per year (*Brabets*, 1997).

Physiography and Groundwater Conditions

Surface elevations in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough range from sea level where the Knik River and Matanuska River enter the Cook Inlet to well over 6,000 feet in the peaks that bound the area. Glacial moraine and outwash deposits primarily mantle the surface of the Mat-Su Valley.

The regional geology and ground water conditions of the Mat-Su Valley vary greatly depending on location. The terrain is dominated by distinctive landforms created by repeated glacial advances and retreats during the Pleistocene epoch (2 million to 10,000 years before present). The unconsolidated layers, layers of sediment that are not cemented together, are comprised of various mixtures of fine- to coarse-grained particles (clay to boulders). The majority of wells in the Mat-Su Valley are located in unconsolidated layers consisting of relatively well sorted sands and gravels. These unconsolidated layers vary substantially in size and distribution throughout the Valley. In general, the unconsolidated layers increase in thickness as you move towards Cook Inlet. (Jokela, Munter, Evans, 1991). Throughout the area numerous confining layers ranging from less than 1- to 60-feet thick separate the unconsolidated layers.



Figure 2. Map showing regional ground-water flow in Matanuska-Susitna Valley. (Jokela, Munter and Evans, 1991)

In the Mat-Su Valley, the groundwater is primarily recharged by snowmelt and precipitation infiltrating into the foothill slopes of the Talkeetna or Chugach Mountains and by direct precipitation and snowmelt throughout the study area.

Groundwater flow in the confined aquifer is generally, north to south in the central region of the valley, toward the Matanuska River in the eastern region and the slope is predominantly northeast to northwest in the western region. The direction of groundwater flow in the upper unconfined aquifer's are more variable due to the influence from surficial topography as well as its close connection with surface water bodies. (*Jokela, Munter and Evans, 1991*) (Figure 2).

SILVER FOX INN PUBLIC WATER SOURCE

Silver Fox Inn public water source is located in the Meadow Creek watershed. The system is a Class B public drinking water source and is owned and operated by the Casandra Alley. The source consists of one well near the southwestern corner of the property, Lot 1 Triangle Subdivision. It is located at an elevation of approximately 250 feet above sea level. The well is inferred to tap the underlying, unconfined aquifer. According to the well log, the Silver Fox Inn well does not appear to be grouted and penetrates silty sand and gravel with a clay and gravel zone to a total depth of 68 feet below land surface. The well is cased to a depth of 58 feet and screened from 58 to 68 feet below land surface in sand and gravel. Based on the well log, the static water level is about 20 feet below the land surface (9/19/83).

This water source operates year round. The Silver Fox Inn drinking water source is assumed to serve no residents and approximately 50 non-residents through one service connection.

ASSESSMENT AND PROTECTION AREA FOR SILVER FOX INN DRINKING WATER SOURCE

The Drinking Water Protection and Assessment Area that has been established for Silver Fox Inn is the area that is most sensitive to contamination. This area has served as a basis for assessing the risk of the drinking water source to contamination. This zone around the drinking water source is the most critical area for the preservation of the quality of the drinking water for this source. For simplicity, this area will be known as your Drinking Water Protection Area and will serve as the area of focus for voluntary protection efforts.

Groundwater recharge for the Silver Fox Inn water system enters the aquifer system through infiltration of direct precipitation within the area. An analytical calculation was used to calculate the size and shape of the area that contributes water to the well. The input parameters describing the attributes of the aquifer in this calculation were adopted from well logs from the surrounding area and from past studies (*Jokela, Munter and Evans, 1991*). This analytical calculation was used as a guide as the first step in establishing the protection area for Silver Fox Inn. Additional methods were further employed to take into account any uncertainties in groundwater flow and aquifer characteristics in an attempt to arrive at a meaningful and conservative protection area with respect to public health (please refer to the Guidance Manual for Class B Public Water Systems for additional information).

The Drinking Water Protection Areas established for wells by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation are separated into zones. These zones correspond to a time-of-travel. Time-of-travel is the time required for water to move in the saturated zone of the ground from a specific point to the well. The Drinking Water Protection Areas for Silver Fox Inn contain four zones, Zone A, Zone B, Zone C and Zone D (See Map 1 in Appendix A). Zone A corresponds to the area between the well and the distance equal to ¹/₄ of the distance of the 2-year time-of-travel. Depending on where a contaminant source is located within Zone A, travel time for a contaminant to the well may be on the order of several days to several hours. Zone A also extends downgradient from the well to take into account the area of the aquifer that is influenced by pumping of the well.

The Zone B protection area for Silver Fox Inn corresponds to a time-of-travel of less than two years and extends eastward. The Zone C protection area extends from the 2-year time of travel to the 5-year time of travel. Lastly, Zone D extends from Zone C to the end of the protection area, roughly 1.2 miles from the Silver Fox Inn well.

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 Silver Fox Inn's Drinking Water Protection Area. This survey was completed through a search of agency records and other publicly available information, as well as a reconnaissance of the area surrounding the well.

Potential sources of contamination to drinking water supplies cover 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 this assessment and 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;

Map 2 in Appendix C depicts the Contaminant Source Inventory for Silver Fox Inn. Inventoried potential sources of contamination within Zone A were associated with residential and commercial type activities (see Table 1 in Appendix B). Zones B and C contain no identified development. Only high and very high potential and existing sources of contamination were inventoried within Zone D. None were identified in Zone D. Below is a summary of the contaminant sources inventoried within the Silver Fox Inn protection area:

- Large-capacity septic systems;
- Approximately 5 acres of residential area;
- Activities associated with highways and roads;
- Dog kennel;
- Single-family septic systems;

These potential contaminant sources present risk for all three categories of drinking water contaminants for Silver Fox Inn drinking water source.

RANKING OF CONTAMINANT RISKS

Potential and existing sources of contamination have been identified, sorted, and ranked according to what type and level of risk they represent. Ranking of contaminant risks for a "potential" or "existing" source of contamination is a function of toxicity and volumes of specific contaminants associated with that source. Contaminant risks are further a function of the number and density of those types of contaminant sources as well as the proximity of those sources to the well.

VULNERABILITY OF SILVER FOX INN DRINKING WATER SOURCES

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

- Natural susceptibility; and
- Contaminant risks.

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

Natural Susceptibility (0 – 50 points)

+

Contaminant Risks (0 – 50 points)

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

Susceptibility of the Wellhead (0 - 25 Points)+ Susceptibility of the Aquifer (0 - 25 Points)

= Natural Susceptibility (Susceptibility of the Well) (0 - 50 Points)

Silver Fox Inn's well is completed in an unconfined aquifer setting. Therefore, contaminants that enter the subsurface within the vicinity of the well and Drinking Water Protection Area may enter the aquifer uninhibited by the absence of any protective layer. It is unclear whether the well is grouted. For purposes of this study, it is assumed that the well is not grouted. The absence of grouting can allow the transport of contaminants from the surface along the well casing. Combining the susceptibility of the wellhead and the aquifer to contamination leads to a score (0 - 50 points) and rating of overall Susceptibility (See Appendix D). Table 1 shows the overall Susceptibility score and rating for Silver Fox Inn.

Table 1. Natural Susceptibility - Susceptibility of	
the Wellhead and Aquifer to Contamination	

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	5	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	17	High
Natural Susceptibility	22	Medium

Contaminant risks to a drinking water source depend on the type, number or density, and distribution of contaminant sources. A large-capacity septic system, approximately 5 acres of residential area, residential septic systems, a dog kennel, and a highway and residential road contribute the highest risk for potential contamination to the Silver Fox Inn source of public drinking water.

A score (0 - 50 points) and rating of Contaminant Risks (See Appendix D) is assigned based on the findings of the Contaminant Source Inventory (Appendix B - Table 1 – Table 4). This portion of the analysis examines any existing or historical contamination that has been detected at the drinking water source through routine sampling. It also reviews contamination that has or may have occurred but has not arrived or been detected at the well. Table 2 summarizes the Contaminant Risks for each category of drinking water contaminants.

 Table 2. Contaminant Risks

Contaminant Risks	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	40	Very High
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	42	Very High
Volatile Organic		
Chemicals	12	Low

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

Vulnerability of the drinking water source to contamination is the combination of susceptibility of the aquifer and the well with contaminant risks. Table 3 contains the overall vulnerability scores (0 - 100) and ratings for each of the three categories of drinking water contaminants (See Appendix D). Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five.

Table 3. Overall Vulnerability of Silver Fox InnPublic Drinking Water Source to Contamination byCategory

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	60	High
Nitrates and Nitrites	65	High
Volatile Organic Chemicals	35	Low

Tables 2 through 4 in Appendix B contain the ranking of potential and existing sources of contamination with respect to bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites, and volatile organic chemicals.

Overall, the contaminant risks for bacteria and viruses and nitrate/nitrites category are very high with the large capacity septic system and nearby dog kennel driving the scores. Combining the potential contamination risk for each category with the susceptibility of the well, yields an overall vulnerability to these contaminants as high for this source of public drinking water.

Nitrates and/or nitrites are found in natural background concentrations at the site, as elsewhere in Alaska. The sampling history of the Silver Fox Inn source water indicates low concentrations of nitrate were reported in samples collected in September 1997, September 1998, and September 1999. (See Chart 6-Contaminant Risks for Nitrates/Nitrites in Appendix D). The reported nitrate contamination was less than 10% of the allowable limit (MCL) for this contaminant. Due to high solubility and weak retention by soil, nitrates are very mobile in soil, moving approximately the same rate as water. Nevertheless, the current nitrate concentration in the Silver Fox Inn water source remains at safe levels, with respect to human health.

Natural gas connections were observed at the Silver Fox Inn and several of the nearby residences suggesting the use of underground or aboveground heating oil tanks is not prevalent. The presence of heating oil or other fuel tanks increases the contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals (VOCs). We are aware of no records indicating any spills have occurred from tanks in the vicinity of the site. The public water system is not required to sample for VOCs, thus it is unknown if any VOCs are present in the drinking water source.

SUMMARY

A *Source Water Assessment* has been completed for the Silver Fox Inn source of public drinking water. The overall vulnerability of this source to contamination is **High** for bacteria and viruses and nitrates and/or 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 the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation 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 public drinking water source.

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- Brabets, T., 1997, Precipitation map of Alaska, Web extension to the U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources for Alaska GIS datasets. URL <u>http://agdc.usgs.gov/data/usgs/water</u>.
- Jokela, J.B., Munter, J.A., and Evans, J.G., 1991, Ground-water resources of the Plamer-Big Lake area, Alaska: a conceptual model. Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys Reports of Investigations 90-4, State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Fairbanks, AK.
- Western Regional Climate Center, 2000, August 24, Web extension to the *Western Regional Climate Center* [WWW document]. URL <u>http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?akmaty</u>.

APPENDIX A

Silver Fox Inn Drinking Water Protection Area

APPENDIX B

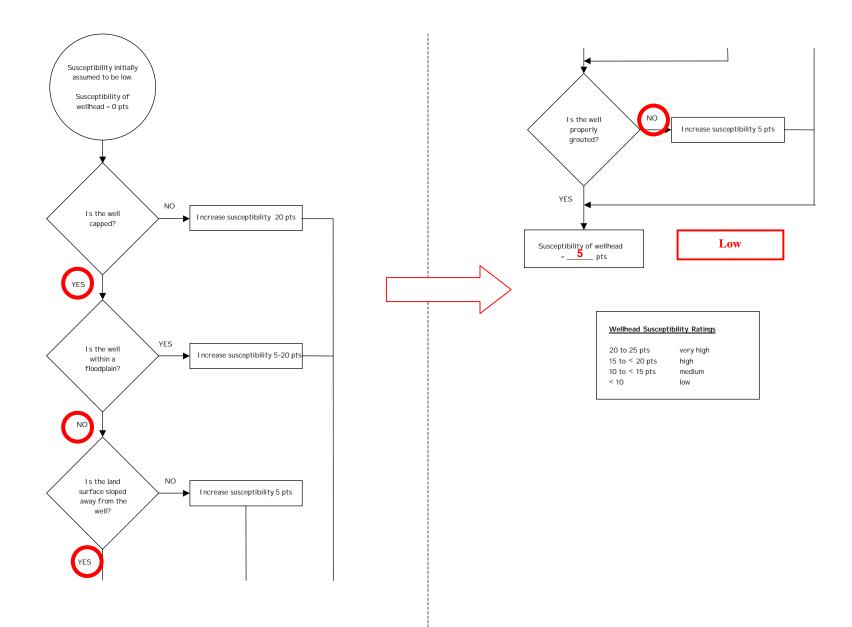
Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Silver Fox Inn

APPENDIX C

Silver Fox Inn Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential & Existing Contaminant Sources

APPENDIX D

Vulnerability Analysis for Silver Fox Inn Public Drinking Water Source



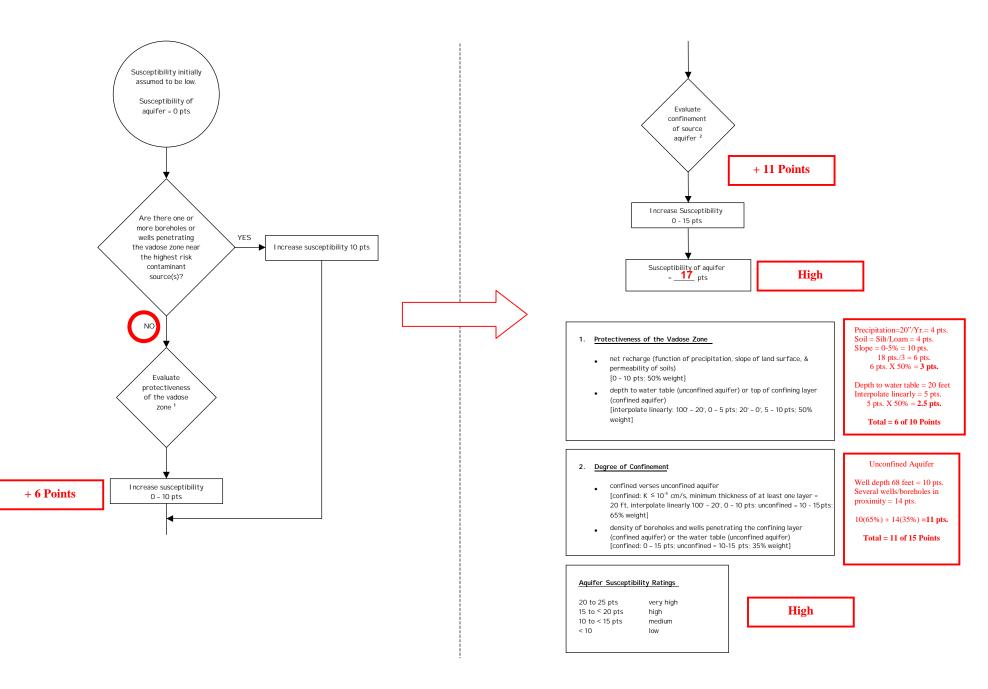
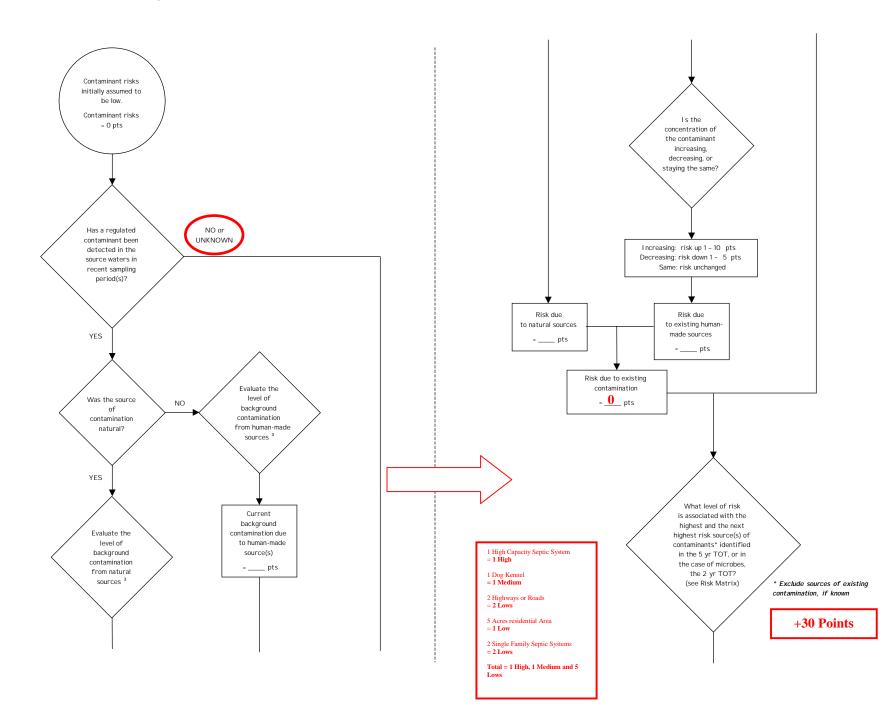
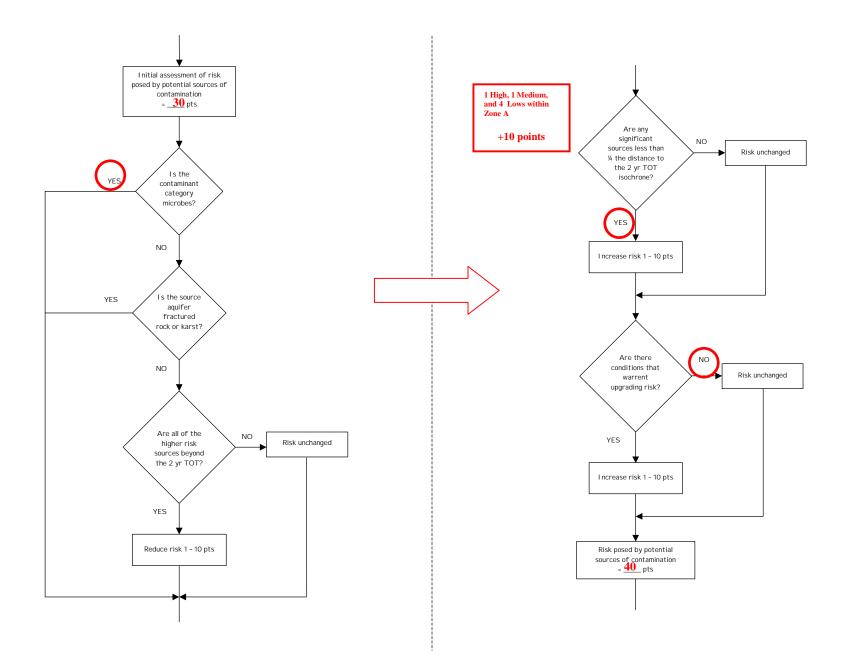


Chart 3. Contaminant risks for Silver Fox Inn – Bacteria & Viruses







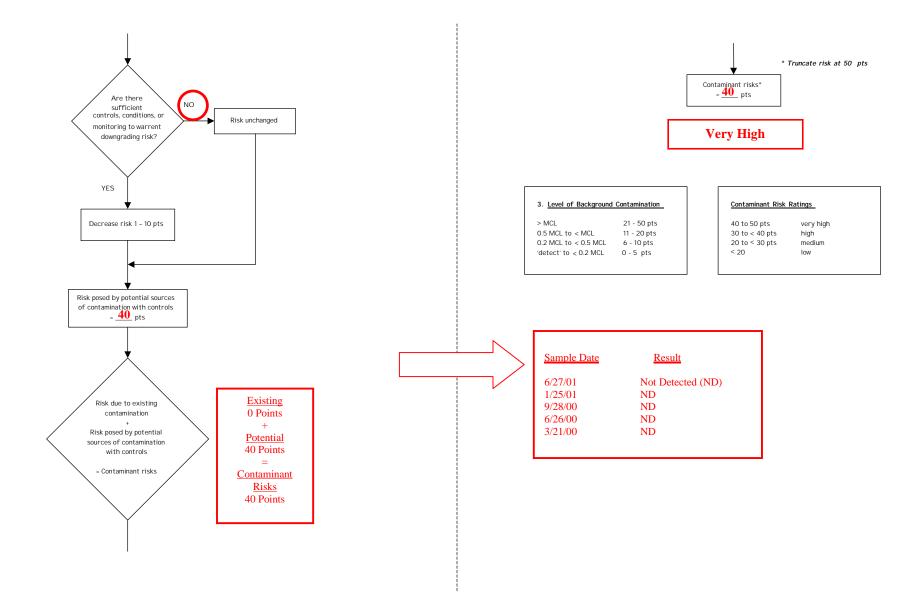


Table 1. Risk Matrix for Contaminant Sources for Silver Fox Inn – Bacteria & Viruses

Total = 1 High, 1 Medium and 5 Lows	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

Level of Risk Associated with the Highest Risk Sources

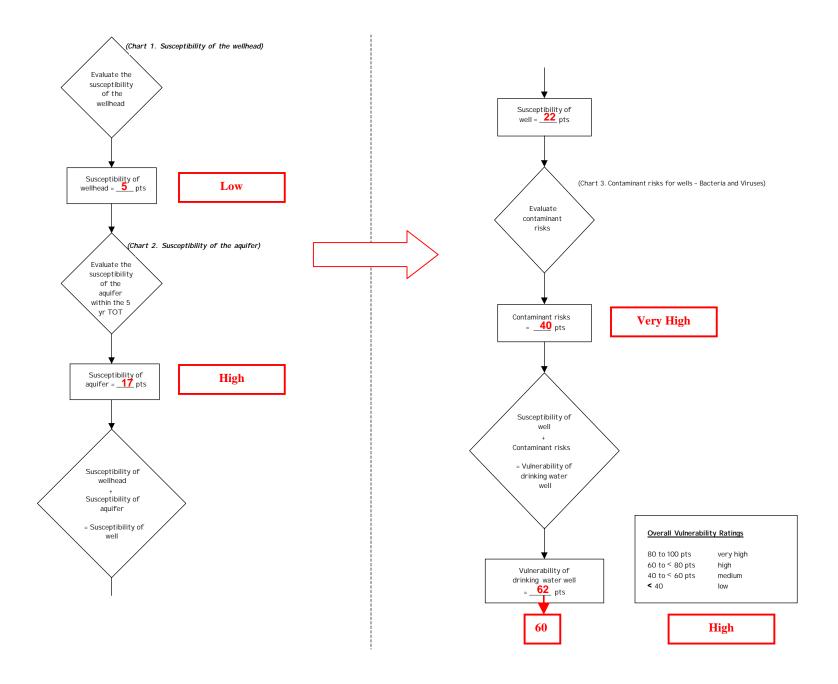
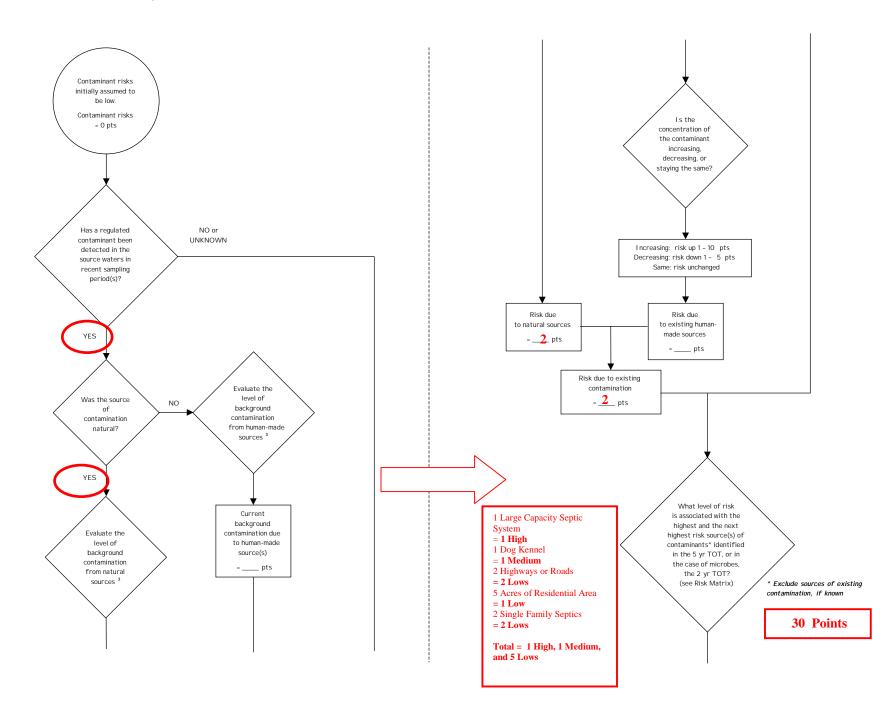
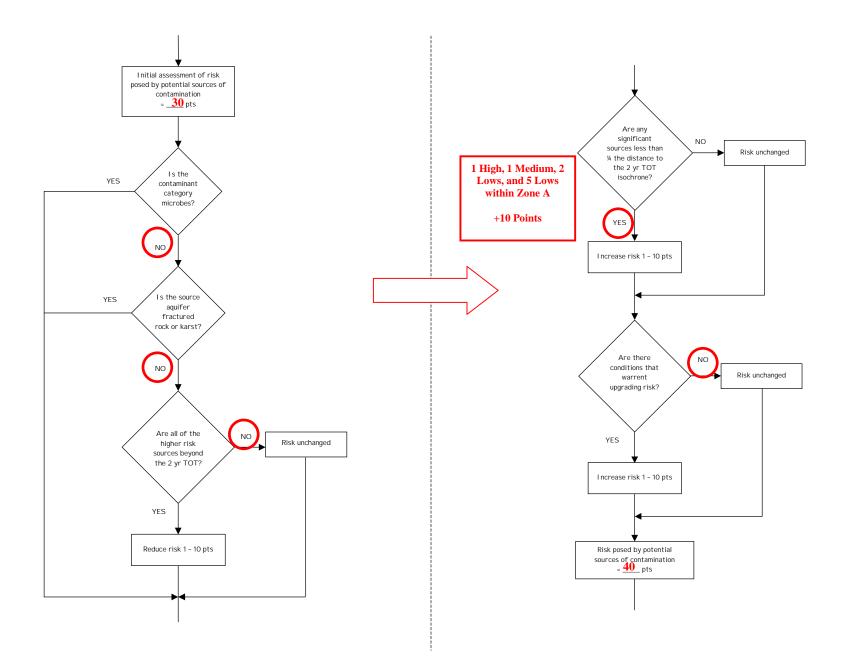
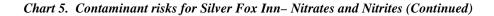


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for Silver Fox Inn – Nitrates and Nitrites







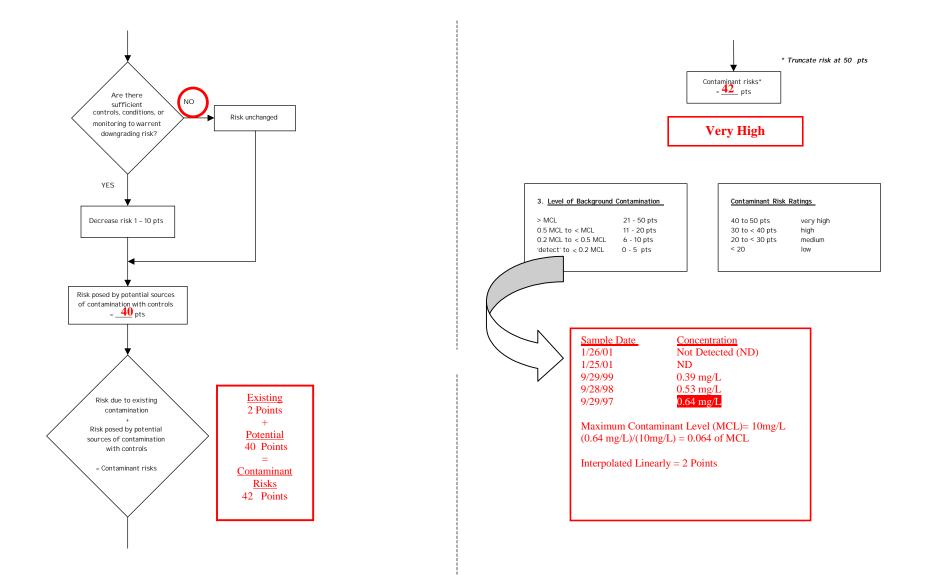


Table 2. Risk Matrix for Contaminant Sources for Silver Fox Inn–Nitrates and Nitrites

Total = 1 High, 1 Medium, and 5 Lows	LOW 10 pts	MEDIUM 20 pts	HIGH 30 pts	VERY HIGH 40 pts
Low	≥ 10 sources + 10 pts	\geq 10 sources + 5 pts	≥ 20 sources + 5 pts	
Medium		≥ 2 sources + 5 pts	≥ 5 sources + 5 pts	\geq 10 sources + 5 pts
High			1 source + 10 pts	≥ 2 sources + 10 pts
Very High				1 source + 10 pts

Level of Risk Associated with the Highest Risk Sources

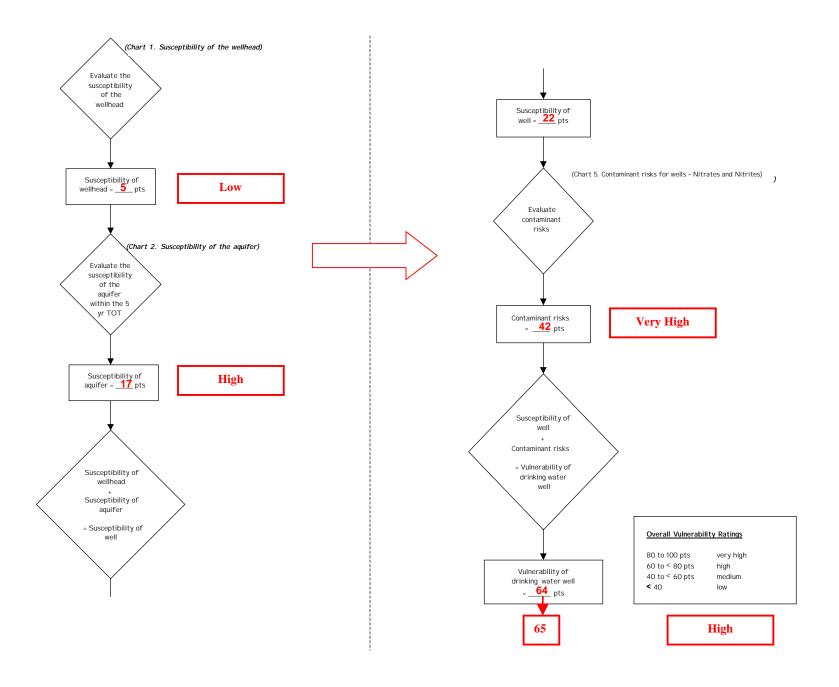
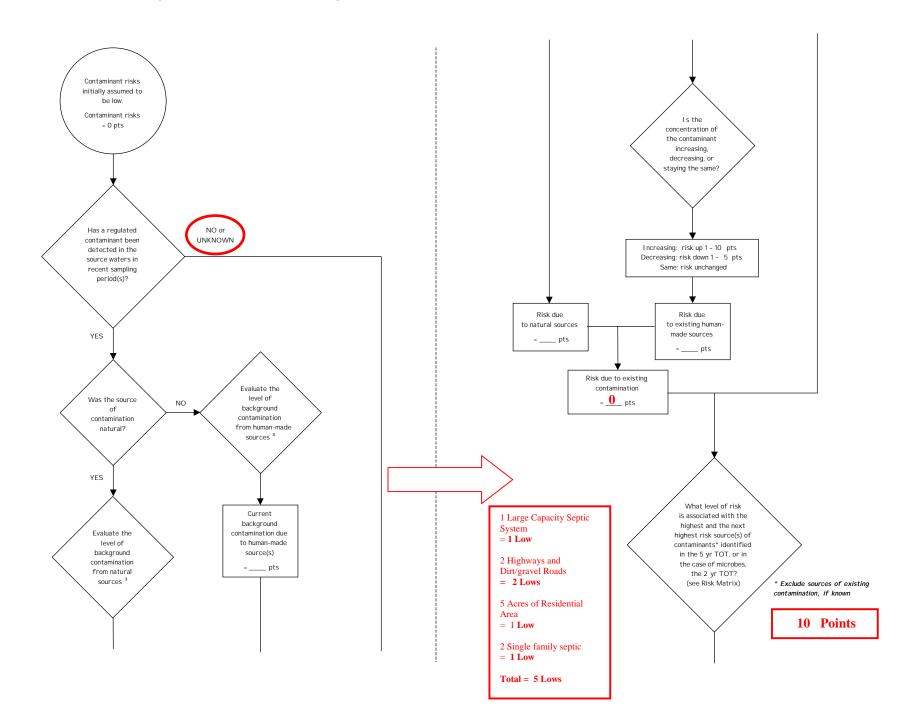
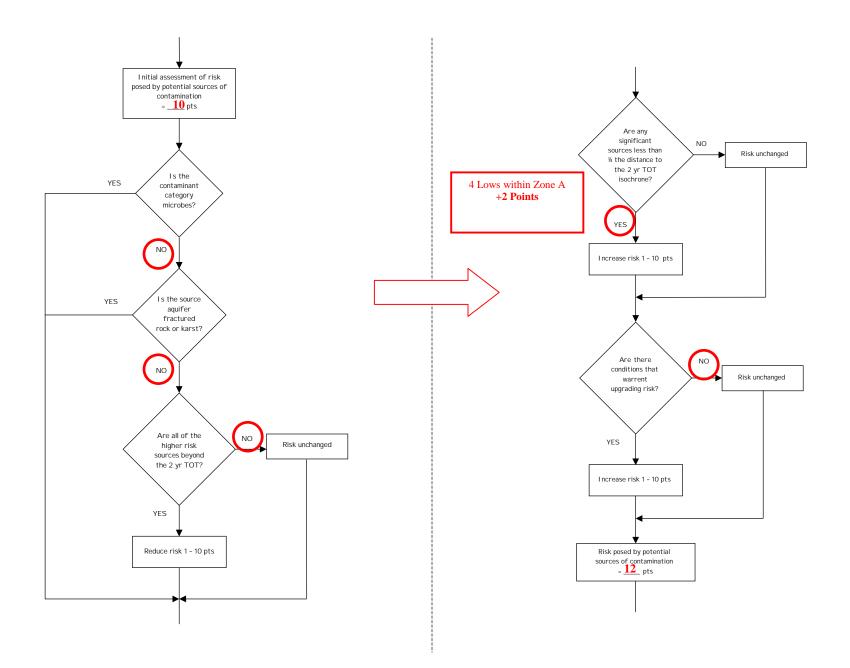
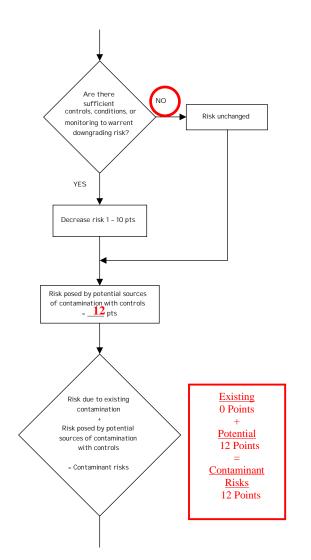


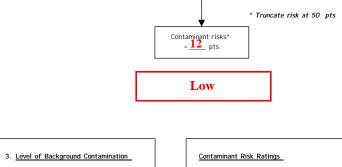
Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Silver Fox Inn – Volatile Organic Chemicals











> MCL	21 - 50 pts
0.5 MCL to < MCL	11 - 20 pts
0.2 MCL to < 0.5 MCL	6 - 10 pts
'detect' to < 0.2 MCL	0 - 5 pts
'detect' to < 0.2 MCL	0-5 pts

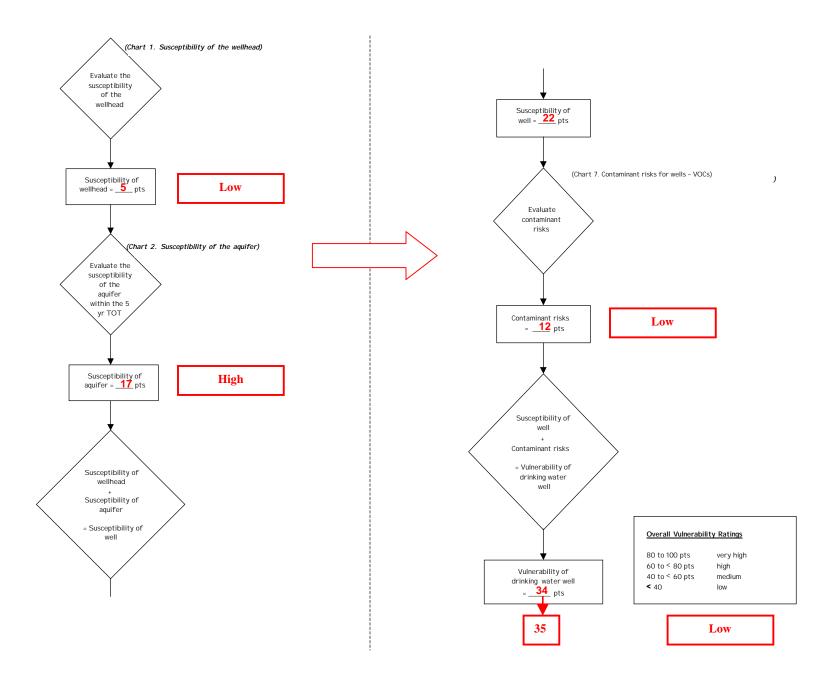
Contaminant	Risk	Ratings	

40 to 50 pts	very high
30 to < 40 pts	high
20 to < 30 pts	medium
< 20	low

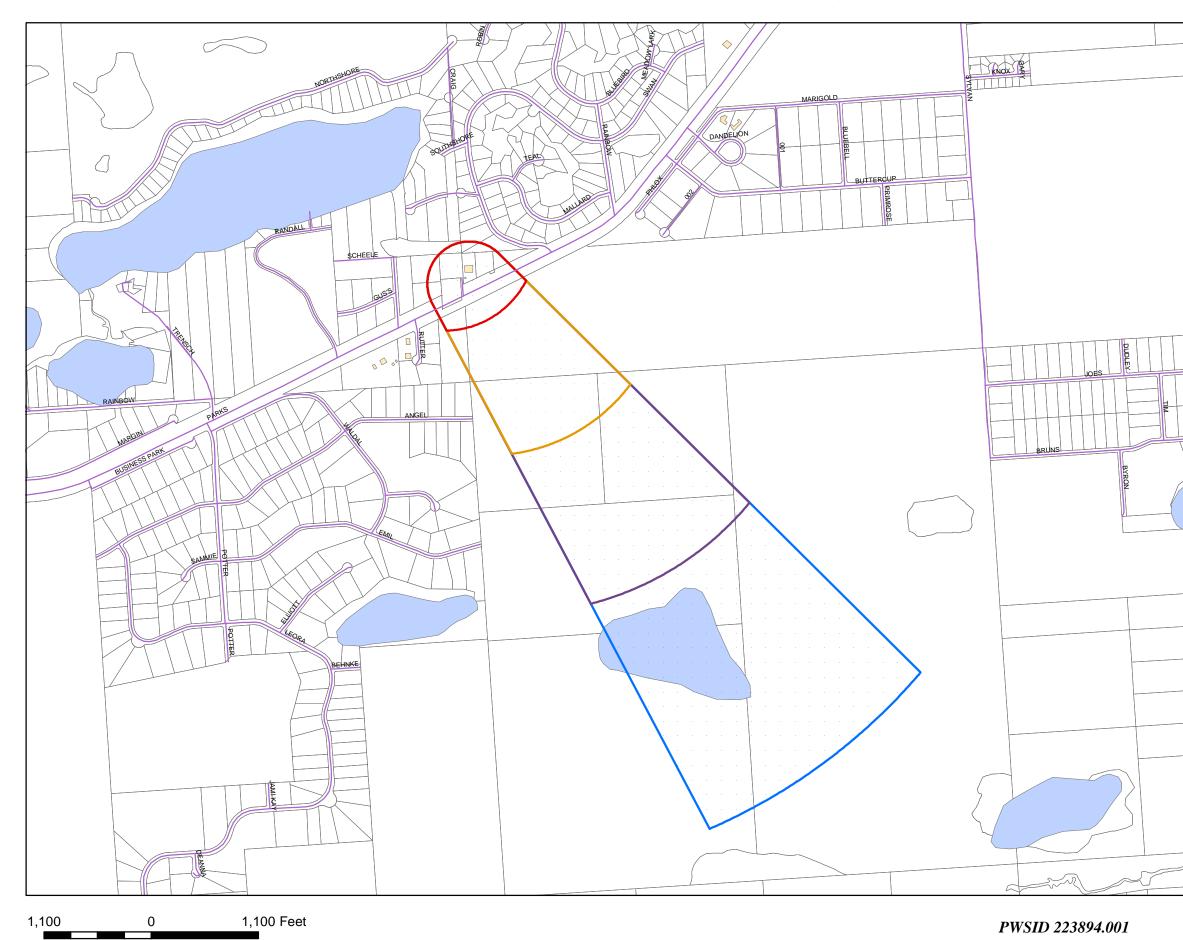
Table 3. Risk Matrix for Contaminant Sources for Silver Fox Inn– Volatile Organic Chemicals

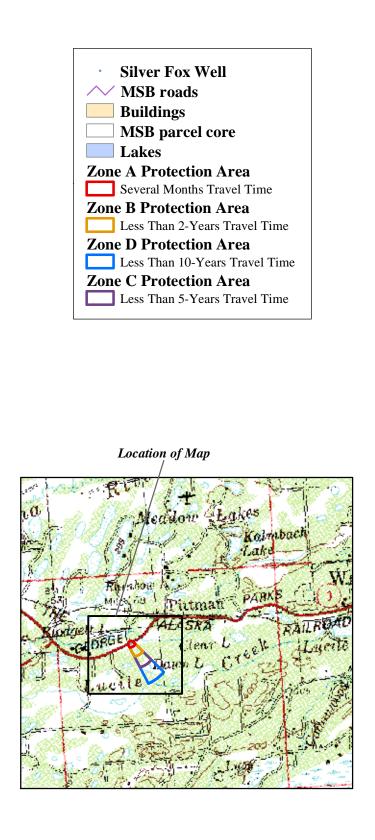
Total = 5 Lows	LOW 10 pts	MEDIUM 20 pts	HIGH 30 pts	VERY HIGH 40 pts
Low	≥ 10 sources + 10 pts	\geq 10 sources + 5 pts	≥ 20 sources + 5 pts	
Medium		≥ 2 sources + 5 pts	≥ 5 sources + 5 pts	≥ 10 sources + 5 pts
High			1 source + 10 pts	≥ 2 sources + 10 pts
Very High				1 source + 10 pts

Level of Risk Associated with the Highest Risk Sources



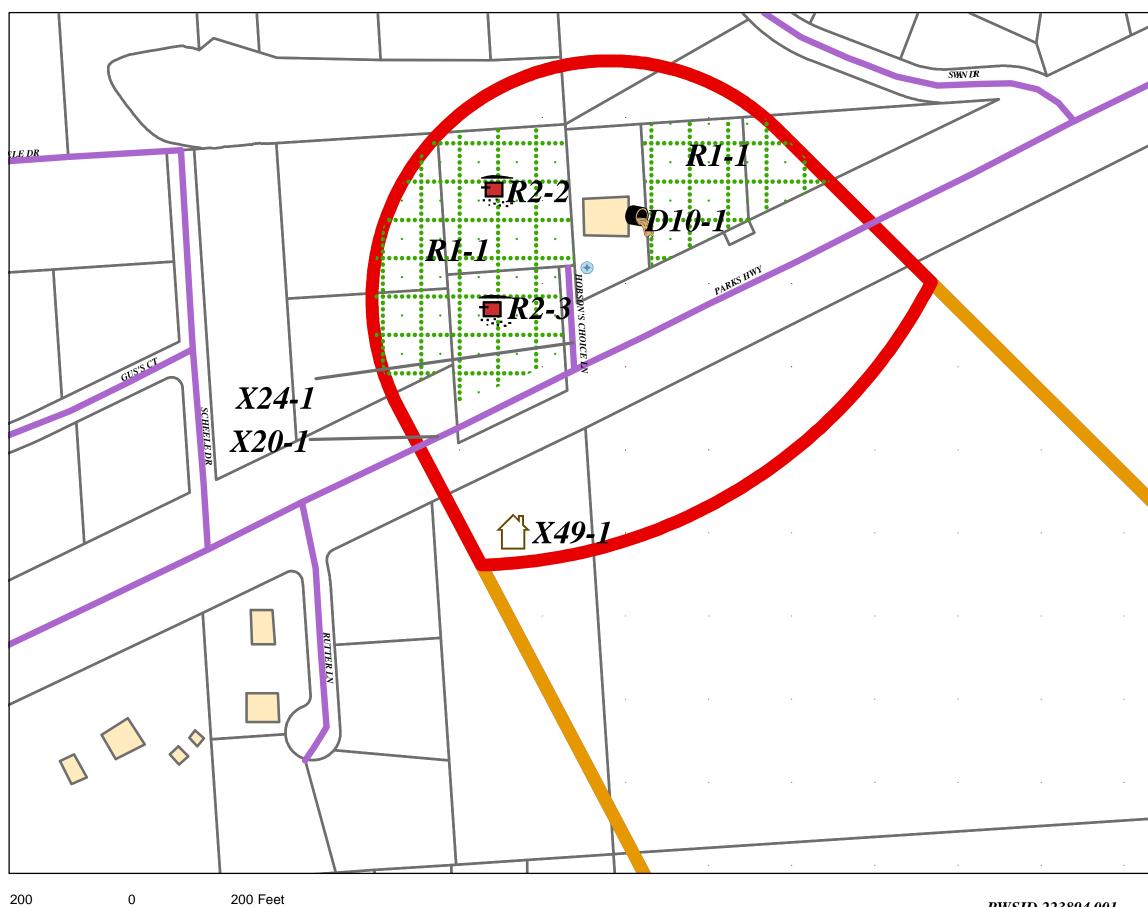
Drinking Water Protection Areas for Silver Fox Inn











Drinking Water Protection Areas for Silver Fox Inn and **Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination**

PWSID 223894.001



Location of Map



Map 2

Contaminant Source Category	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID Tag	Zone	Location	Мар	Comments
Injection wells (Class V) Large-						
Capacity Septic System (Drainfield	D10	D10-1	Α	East of Silver Fox Inn	2	
Residential Areas	R1	R1-1	Α	North of Parks Hwy	2	5 acres
Septic systems (serves one single-						
family home)	R2	R2-1	Α	West of Silver Fox Inn	3	
Septic systems (serves one single-				Off of Hobson's Choice		
family home)	R2	R2-2	Α	Ln.	3	
Highways and roads, paved (cement						
or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	Α	Parks Highway	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	Α	Hobson's Choice Ln.	2	
Kennels	X49	X49-1	A	Across Parks Hwy.	2	

Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination for Silver Fox Inn Bacteria and Viruses

Contaminant Source Category	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID Tag	Zone	Risk Ranking for Analysis	Overall Rank After Analysis	Location	Мар	Comments
Injection wells (Class V) Large-								
Capacity Septic System (Drainfield	D10	D10-1	Α	High	1	East of Silver Fox Inn	2	
Kennels	X49	X49-1	Α	Medium	2	Across Parks Hwy.	2	
Residential Areas	<i>R1</i>	R1-1	A	Low	3	North of Parks Hwy	2	5 acres
Septic systems (serves one single-								
family home)	R2	R2-1	Α	Very Low	4	West of Silver Fox Inn	3	
Septic systems (serves one single-						Off of Hobson's Choice		
family home)	R2	R2-2	Α	Very Low	5	Ln.	3	
Highways and roads, paved (cement								
or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	Α	Very Low		Parks Highway	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	Α	Very Low		Hobson's Choice Ln.	2	

Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination for Silver Fox Inn Nitrates and Nitrites

Contaminant Source Category	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID Tag	Zone	Risk Ranking for Analysis	Overall Rank After Analysis	Location	Мар	Comments
Injection wells (Class V) Large-								
Capacity Septic System (Drainfield	D10	D10-1	Α	High	1	East of Silver Fox Inn	2	
Kennels	X49	X49-1	Α	Medium	2	Across Parks Hwy.	2	
Residential Areas	R1	R1-1	Α	Low	3	North of Parks Hwy	2	5 acres
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	Α	Low	4	Hobson's Choice Ln.	2	
Septic systems (serves one single-								
family home)	R2	R2-1	Α	Very Low	5	West of Silver Fox Inn	3	
Septic systems (serves one single-						Off of Hobson's Choice		
family home)	R2	R2-2	Α	Very Low		Ln.	3	
Highways and roads, paved (cement								
or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	Α	Very Low		Parks Highway	2	

Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination for Silver Fox Inn Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs)

Contaminant Source Category	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID Tag	Zone	Risk Ranking for Analysis	Overall Rank After Analysis	Location	Мар	Comments
Injection wells (Class V) Large-								
Capacity Septic System (Drainfield	D10	D10-1	Α	Low	1	East of Silver Fox Inn	2	
Residential Areas	R1	R1-1	Α	Low	2	North of Parks Hwy	2	5 acres
Septic systems (serves one single-								
family home)	R2	R2-1	Α	Very Low	3	West of Silver Fox Inn	3	
Septic systems (serves one single-						Off of Hobson's Choice		
family home)	R2	R2-2	Α	Very Low	4	Ln.	3	
Highways and roads, paved (cement								
or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	Α	Very Low	5	Parks Highway	2	
Highways and roads, dirt/gravel	X24	X24-1	Α	Very Low		Hobson's Choice Ln.	2	