

# *Source Water Assessment* for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area Anchorage, Alaska

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and Vulnerability Analysis

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DRINKING WATER PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT 828  
PWSID 218475.001

January 2003

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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

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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.

## CONTENTS

|   | Page |   | Page |
|---|------|---|------|
| Executive Summary                               | 1    | Inventory of Potential and Existing                 |      |
| Introduction                                    | 1    | Contaminant Sources                                 | 4    |
| Description of the Anchorage area, Alaska       | 1    | Ranking of Contaminant Risks                        | 4    |
| USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Public Water |      | Vulnerability of USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's |      |
| System  | 3    | Drinking Water Source                               | 5    |
| Assessment/Protection Area for USAF Elmendorf-  |      | Summary   | 6    |
| Hillberg Ski Area's Drinking Water Source       |      | References Cited                                    | 8    |

4

## TABLES

|       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| TABLE | 1. Natural Susceptibility - Susceptibility of the Wellhead and Aquifer to Contamination | 5 |
|       | 2. Contaminant Risks  | 6 |
|       | 3. Overall Vulnerability of the Drinking Water Source to Contamination                  | 6 |

## ILLUSTRATIONS

|        |  |   |
|--------|--|---|
| FIGURE | 1. Index map showing the location of Anchorage, Alaska | 1 |
|        | 2. Generalized hydrologic cycle in the Anchorage area  | 2 |

## APPENDICES

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| APPENDIX | A. USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Drinking Water Protection Area (Map 1)   |
|          | B. Contaminant Source Inventory for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area (Table 1)   |
|          | Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area– Bacteria and Viruses (Table 2)   |
|          | Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area– Nitrates and/or Nitrites (Table 3)                                       |
|          | Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area– Volatile organic chemicals (Table 4)                                     |
|          | C. USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Source (Map 2 through Map 4)                     |
|          | D. Vulnerability Analysis for and Risk Ranking for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Public Drinking Water Source (Chart 1 – Chart 8 and Table 1 – Table 3) |

# **Source Water Assessment for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Source of Public Drinking Water, Anchorage, Alaska**

## **A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and Vulnerability Analysis**

**Drinking Water Protection Program**  
**Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Public Water System for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well in the Anchorage area. Identified potential and current sources of contaminants for the USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area include roads and airports. 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 USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area received a vulnerability rating of **low** for bacteria and/or viruses, nitrates and/or nitrates and volatile organic chemicals and.



**Figure 1. Index map showing the location of Anchorage, Alaska**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this environmental assessment is to provide public water system owners and/or 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 source of public drinking water serving the USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area. This water system consists of one well in the Anchorage area (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 ANCHORAGE AREA, ALASKA**

#### **Location**

Anchorage, located in southcentral Alaska, encompasses 1,698 square miles of land and 264 square miles of water. The area containing a majority of the urban development, commonly referred to as the Anchorage Bowl, encompasses approximately 180 square miles [Partick, Brabets, and Glass, 1989] and envelopes the low lands of the area. This area is bounded on the east by the Chugach Mountains and the north, west, and south by the Knik and Turnagain Arms of Cook Inlet (Figure 1). In recent times, urban development has extended eastward along the flanks of the Chugach Mountains. This area, known locally as the Anchorage Hillside, contains development at elevations exceeding 3,700 feet in elevation above sea level.

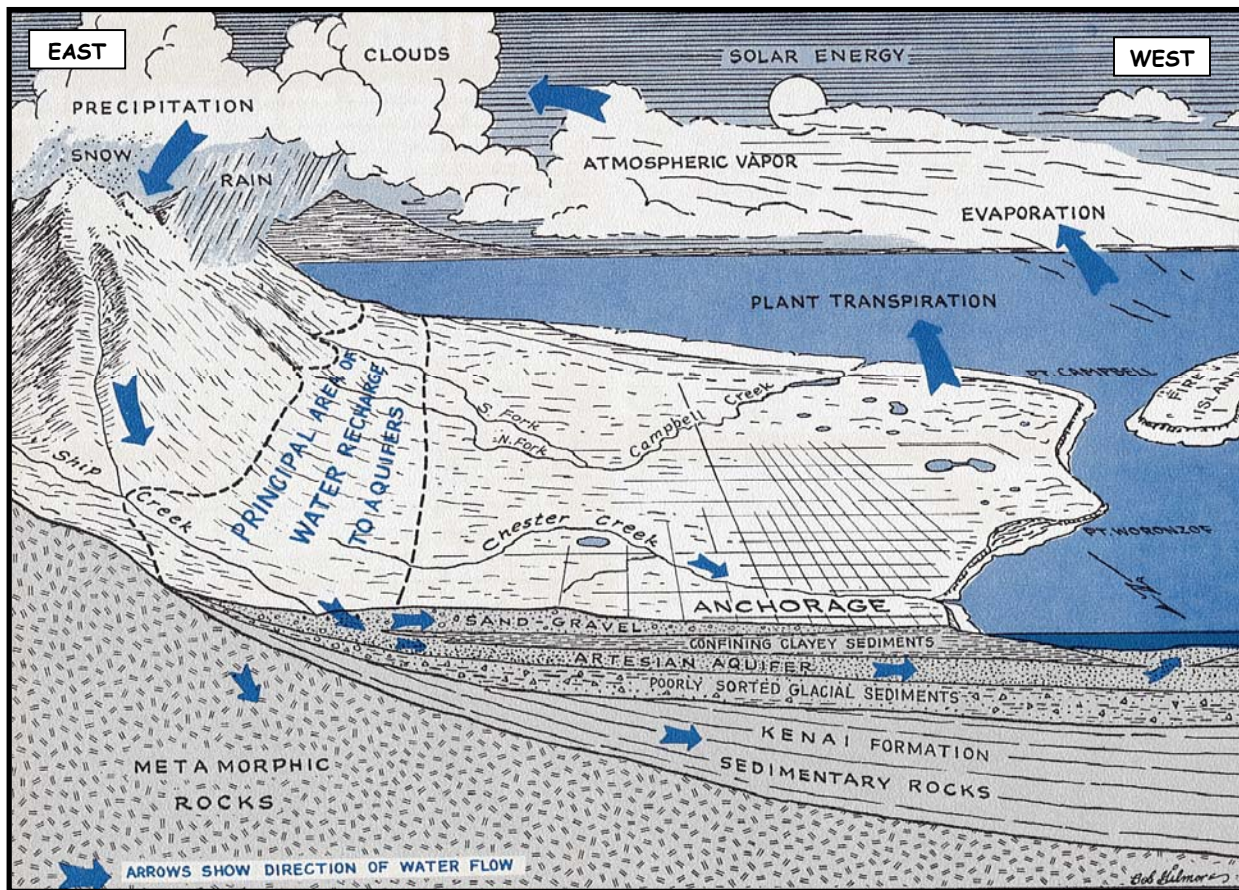


Figure 2. Generalized hydrologic cycle in the Anchorage area [Barnwell, George, Dearborn, Weeks, and Zenone, 1972].

### Climate

The Anchorage 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. Mean annual precipitation at the Anchorage International Airport is approximately 16 inches per year. On average, Anchorage receives a total snow accumulation of 69 inches per year. Precipitation generally increases inland toward the Chugach Mountains where annual precipitation may exceed 160 inches per year [Barnwell, George, Dearborn, Weeks, and Zenone, 1972]. Mean daily temperature ranges from 65° F during July to 8° F in January [Western Regional Climate Center, 2000].

### Physiography and Groundwater Conditions

Surface elevations in the Anchorage area range from sea level at Knik and Turnagain Arms to well over 5,000 feet in the peaks that bound the area. Glacial moraine and outwash deposits primarily mantle the surface of the Anchorage Bowl.

The backbone of the Chugach Mountains is composed primarily of metamorphic marine and volcanic rocks (bedrock). These high peaks that bound Anchorage's east side are flanked with colluvium or slope deposits. These

slope deposits eventually grade into the glacial and stream deposits at lower elevations in the Anchorage Bowl.

In the Anchorage area, two principal groundwater flow systems or aquifers exist (see Figure 2). The upper unconfined aquifer or water-table aquifer is separated from a lower confined aquifer system by layers of silty, clayey glacially derived sediments (confining layer) [Ulery and Updike, 1983]. The lower confined aquifer system consists of a series of hydrologically interconnected layers and lenses of gravel, sand and silt that, collectively, form the confined aquifer. The confining layer ranges from 0 to 270 feet thick throughout the Anchorage area and generally thins with increasing distance from Cook Inlet, thus pinching out at the mountain front [Patrick, Brabets, and Glass, 1989].

Water enters or recharges these two aquifer systems in several different ways. Along the front of the Chugach

Mountains, groundwater seeps from fractures in bedrock into the sediments. At these higher elevations, rain and snowmelt also enter the sediments. This area along the mountain front is considered the principal recharge area for wells in the Anchorage area. Precipitation in the low lands may also percolate directly into the ground. Lastly, aquifers may also be recharged by streams where surface

water percolates into surrounding permeable sediments (losing reaches of streams). Groundwater flow in the confined aquifer is generally east to west from the mountain front toward Cook Inlet and Turnagain Arm, except in areas where the direction of flow is influenced by large municipal or industrial production wells. The direction of groundwater flow in the upper unconfined aquifer is more variable due to the influence from surficial topography as well as its close connection with surface water bodies.

#### **USAF ELMENDORF-HILLBERG SKI AREA'S PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM**

The public water system serving USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well, which is located in the foothills of the Chugach Mountains on Elmendorf Air force base near Ridge Road and Loop Road.. The well is located at an elevation of approximately 75 feet above sea level

According to the most recent Sanitary Survey (1998) the well was installed with a cap providing a sanitary seal. A properly installed sanitary seal may provide protection against contaminants from entering the source waters at the well casing. The well is not grouted according to current ADEC regulations. Proper grouting provides added protection against contaminants traveling along the well casing and into source waters.

Records indicate that the well is 160 feet deep. There is no well log available for the well serving USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area. The well log indicates that there is a confining layer consisting of clay from around 56 to 112 feet below land surface. The confining layers may provide protection from contaminants entering the aquifer. However, the clay layers tend to thin out towards the mountains allowing contaminants that enter the subsurface near the base of the mountains to enter the confined aquifer uninhibited by the absence of any protective layer.

This system operates year-round and serves 75 non-residents through 1 service connections.

#### **ASSESSMENT AND PROTECTION AREA FOR USAF ELMENDORF-HILLBERG SKI AREA'S DRINKING WATER SOURCE**

The Drinking Water Protection and Assessment Area that has been established for the source of drinking water serving the USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area 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. The zones around the

drinking water source outline the most critical area for the preservation of the quality of the drinking water for this system. For simplicity, this area will be known as your Drinking

Water Protection Area and will serve as the focus for voluntary protection efforts.

Conceptually, groundwater enters the aquifer systems along the front range of the Chugach Mountains (Figure 2) and flows toward Cook Inlet. An analytical calculation was used to determine 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 the U.S. Geological Survey [*Patrick, Brabets, and Glass, 1989*]. This analytical calculation was used as a guide as the first step in establishing the protection area for each public drinking water source in Anchorage. Additional methods were further employed to take into account any uncertainties in groundwater flow and aquifer characteristics to arrive at meaningful and conservative protection areas 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 Area for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area contains four zones, Zone A through Zone D (See Map 1 in Appendix A). Zone A corresponds to the area between the well and the distance equal to  $\frac{1}{4}$  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. Zone B corresponds to a time-of-travel of less than two years. Zones C and D correspond to those areas between 5 years and 10 years time-of-travel, respectively.

#### **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 Drinking Water Protection Area for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area. This assessment was completed through a search of agency records and other publicly available information. 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

Maps 2 in Appendix C depict the Contaminant Source Inventory for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area. Table 1 in Appendix B lists the inventoried potential sources of contamination within Zones A through D.

### 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.

Tables 2 through 7 in Appendix B contain the ranking of potential and existing sources of contamination with respect to bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites, volatile organic chemicals, heavy metals, synthetic organic chemicals, and other organic chemicals.

### VULNERABILITY OF USAF ELMENDORF-HILLBERG SKI AREA’S DRINKING WATER SOURCE

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 have been analyzed and an overall vulnerability score of 0 to 100 ultimately assigned:

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

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)

Combining the susceptibility of the wellhead and the aquifer to contamination leads to a score (0 – 50 points) and rating of overall Susceptibility of the well to contamination (See Appendix D). Table 1 depicts the overall Susceptibility score and rating for the source of public drinking water serving the USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area.

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

|                                | Score | Rating |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Susceptibility of the Wellhead | 5     | Low    |
| Susceptibility of the Aquifer  | 8     | Low    |
| Natural Susceptibility         | 13    | Low    |

Contaminant risks to a drinking water source depend on the type, number or density, and distribution of contaminant sources. A score (0 – 50 points) and rating of Contaminant Risks (See Appendix D) is assigned based on the findings of the Contaminant Source Inventory (See Appendix B - Table 1 – Table 7). 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       | 10    | Low    |
| Nitrates and/or Nitrites   | 10    | Low    |
| Volatile Organic Chemicals | 12    | Low    |

Appendix D contains eight charts, which together form the ‘Vulnerability Analysis’ for a Class B public drinking water system. 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, 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 USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area’s Public Drinking Water Source to Contamination by Category**

| Category                   | Score | Rating |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
| Bacteria and Viruses       | 25    | Low    |
| Nitrates and Nitrites      | 25    | Low    |
| Volatile Organic Chemicals | 25    | 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.

#### **Bacteria and Viruses**

The contaminant risk for bacteria and viruses is low with roads presenting the most significant risk to the drinking water well.

After combining the contaminant risk for bacteria and

viruses with the natural susceptibility of the well, the overall vulnerability is low.

#### **Nitrates and Nitrites**

The contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites is low with roads and an airport presenting the most significant risk to the drinking water well.

Sampling history for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area indicates that nitrates have not been detected in source waters. (See Chart 5 - Contaminant Risks for Nitrates and/or Nitrites in Appendix D).

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 low with roads and an airport presenting the only identified risk for volatile organic chemicals (See Chart 7 – Contaminant Risks for Volatile Organic Chemicals in Appendix D).

Recent sampling history of USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area well indicates that no volatile organic chemicals have been detected in the source waters.

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.

### **SUMMARY**

A *Source Water Assessment* has been completed for the source of public drinking water serving USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area. The overall vulnerability of this source to contamination is **low** for bacteria and viruses, nitrates and/or nitrites and 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 USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area 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 USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area’s public drinking water source.



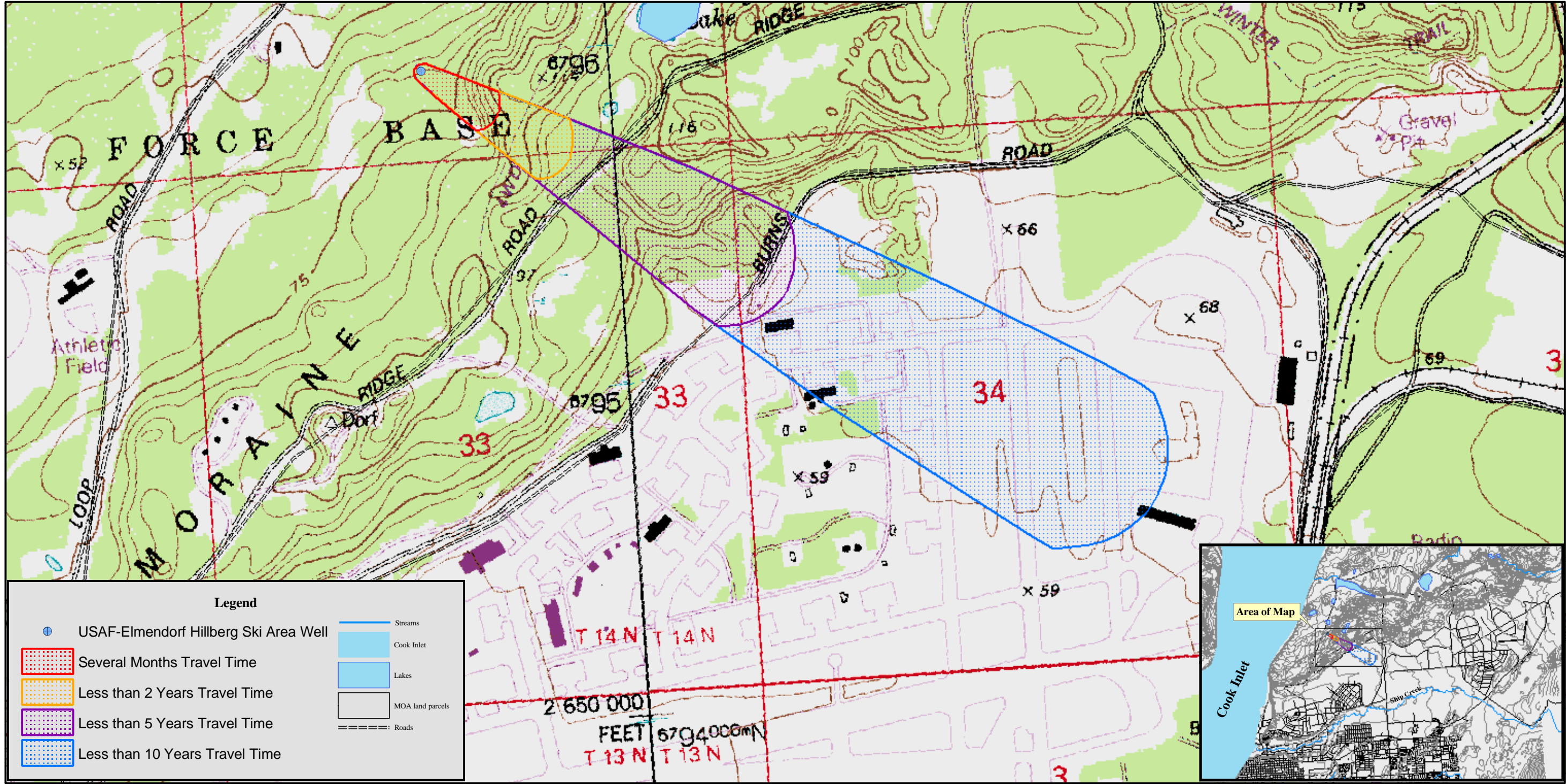
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- Patrick, L.D., Brabets, T.P., and Glass, R.L., 1989, Simulation of ground-water flow at Anchorage, Alaska: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 88-4139, 41p.
- Ulery, C.A. and Updike, R.G, 1983, Subsurface structure of the cohesive facies of the Bootlegger Cove Formation, Southwest Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys Professional Report 84, 5 p.
- Western Regional Climate Center, 2000, August 24, Web extension to the *Western Regional Climate Center* [WWW document]. URL <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/index.html>

## **APPENDIX A**

### **USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Drinking Water Protection Area**

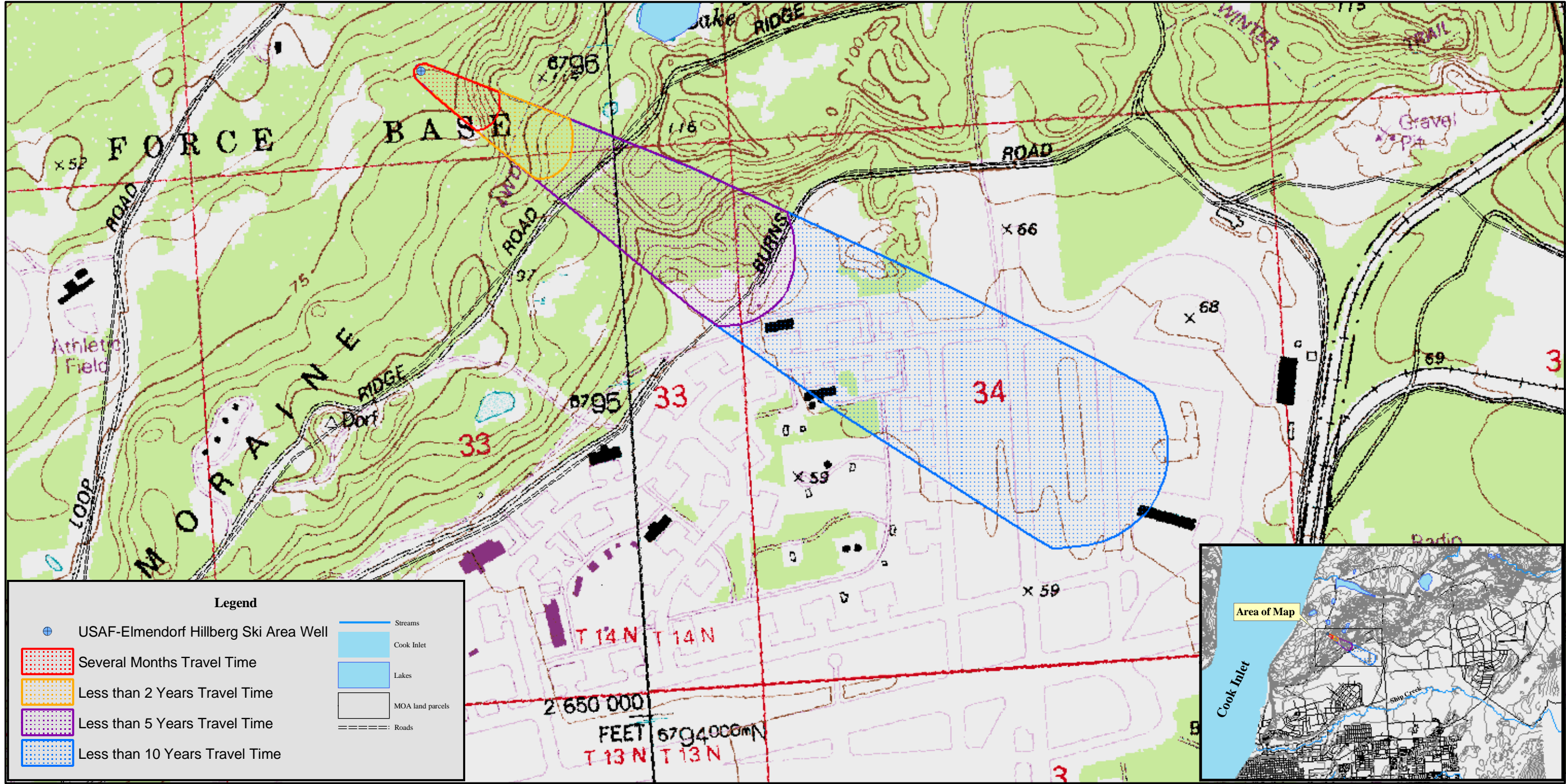
# Drinking Water Protection Area for USAF Hillberg Ski Area



Data Sources:  
Background-USGS 1:25,000  
Parcels, roads, lakes and streams- Municipality of Anchorage



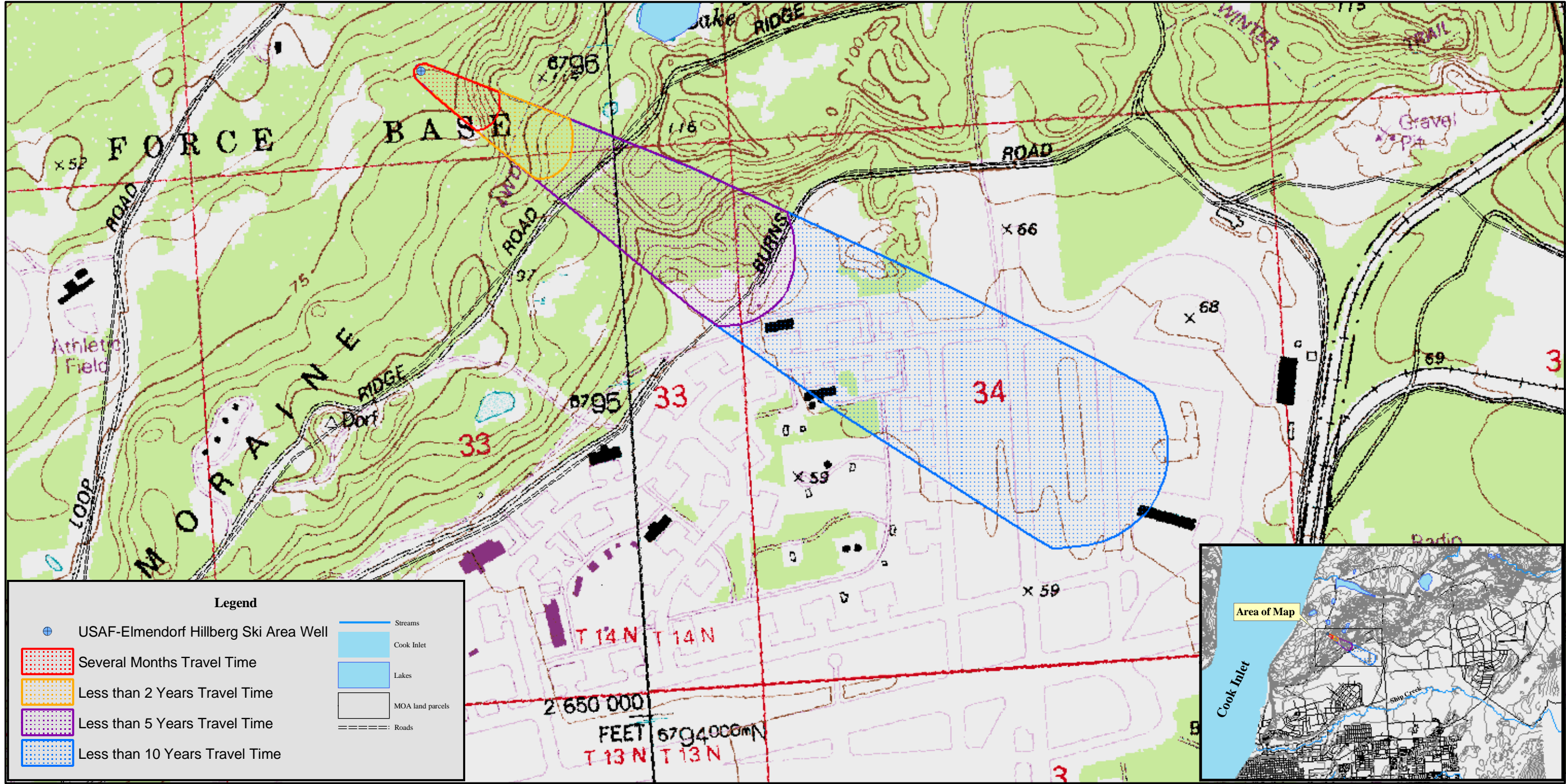
# Drinking Water Protection Area for USAF Hillberg Ski Area



Data Sources:  
Background-USGS 1:25,000  
Parcels, roads, lakes and streams- Municipality of Anchorage



# Drinking Water Protection Area for USAF Hillberg Ski Area



Data Sources:  
Background-USGS 1:25,000  
Parcels, roads, lakes and streams- Municipality of Anchorage

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area**

| <i>Contaminant Source Type</i>                | <i>Contaminant Source ID</i> | <i>CS ID tag</i> | <i>Zone</i> | <i>Map Number</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|---|------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt) | X20                          | X20-1            | C           | 2                 |                 |
| Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt) | X20                          | X20-2            | C           | 2                 |                 |
| Airports                                      | X14                          | X14-01           | D           | 2                 |                 |

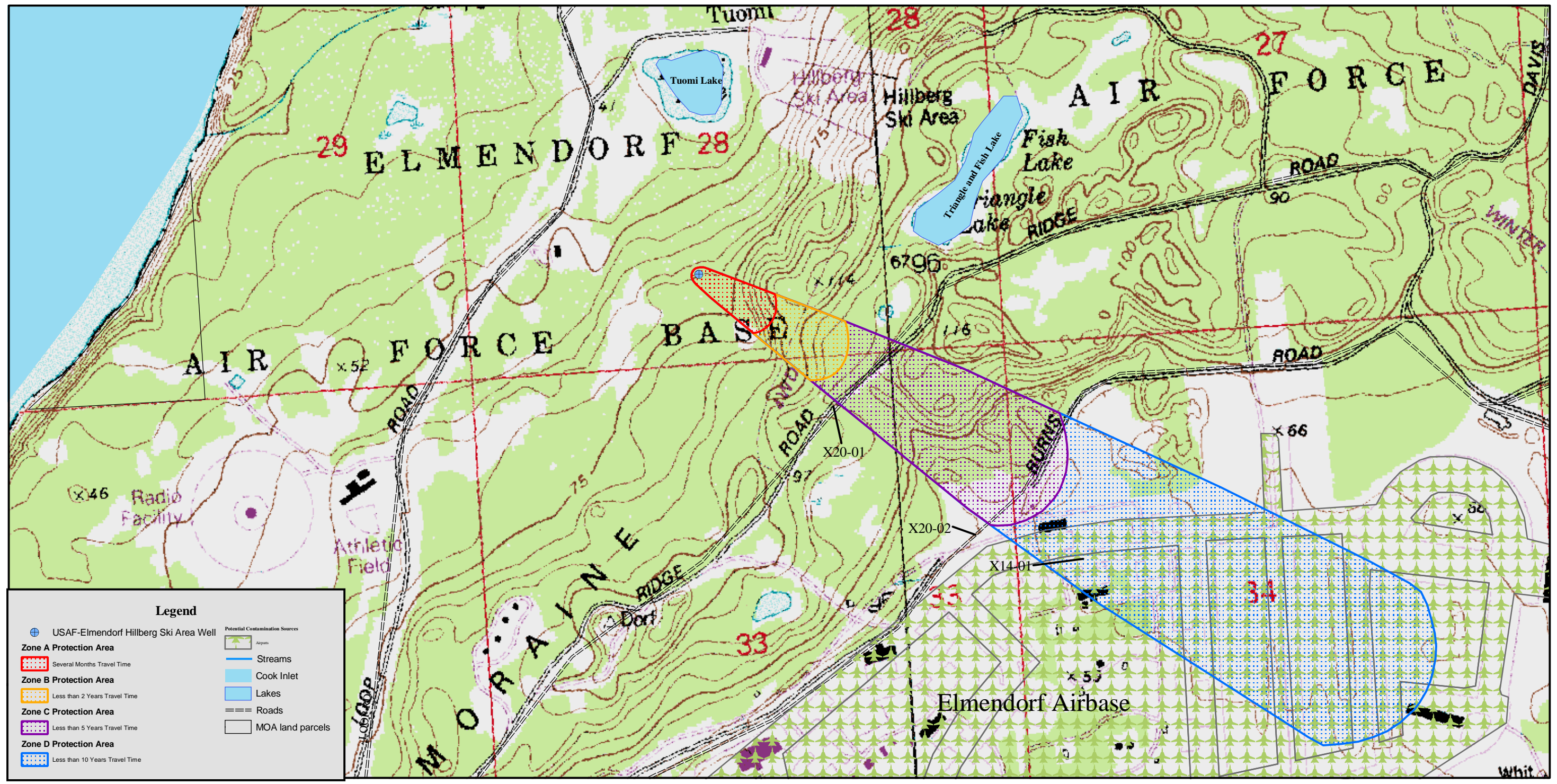


| <i>Contaminant Source Type</i>                | <i>Contaminant Source ID</i> | <i>CS ID tag</i> | <i>Zone</i> | <i>Map Number</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|---|------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt) | X20                          | X20-1            | C           | 2                 |                 |
| Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt) | X20                          | X20-2            | C           | 2                 |                 |
| Airports                                      | X14                          | X14-01           | D           | 2                 |                 |

## **APPENDIX C**

### **USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential & Existing Contaminant Sources**

# Drinking Water Protection Area for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area with Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination

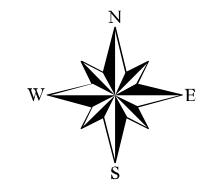


0 500 1,000 2,000  
Feet

1:12,000

Data Sources:  
Background and roads-USGS 1:25,000  
Parcels, lakes and streams- Municipality of Anchorage  
Contaminant Sources and Drinking Water Protection Area - ADEC

PWSID: 218475.001



## Map 2

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Vulnerability Analysis for USAF Elmendorf-Hillberg Ski Area's Public Drinking Water Source**

**Chart 1. Susceptibility of the wellhead - USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area**

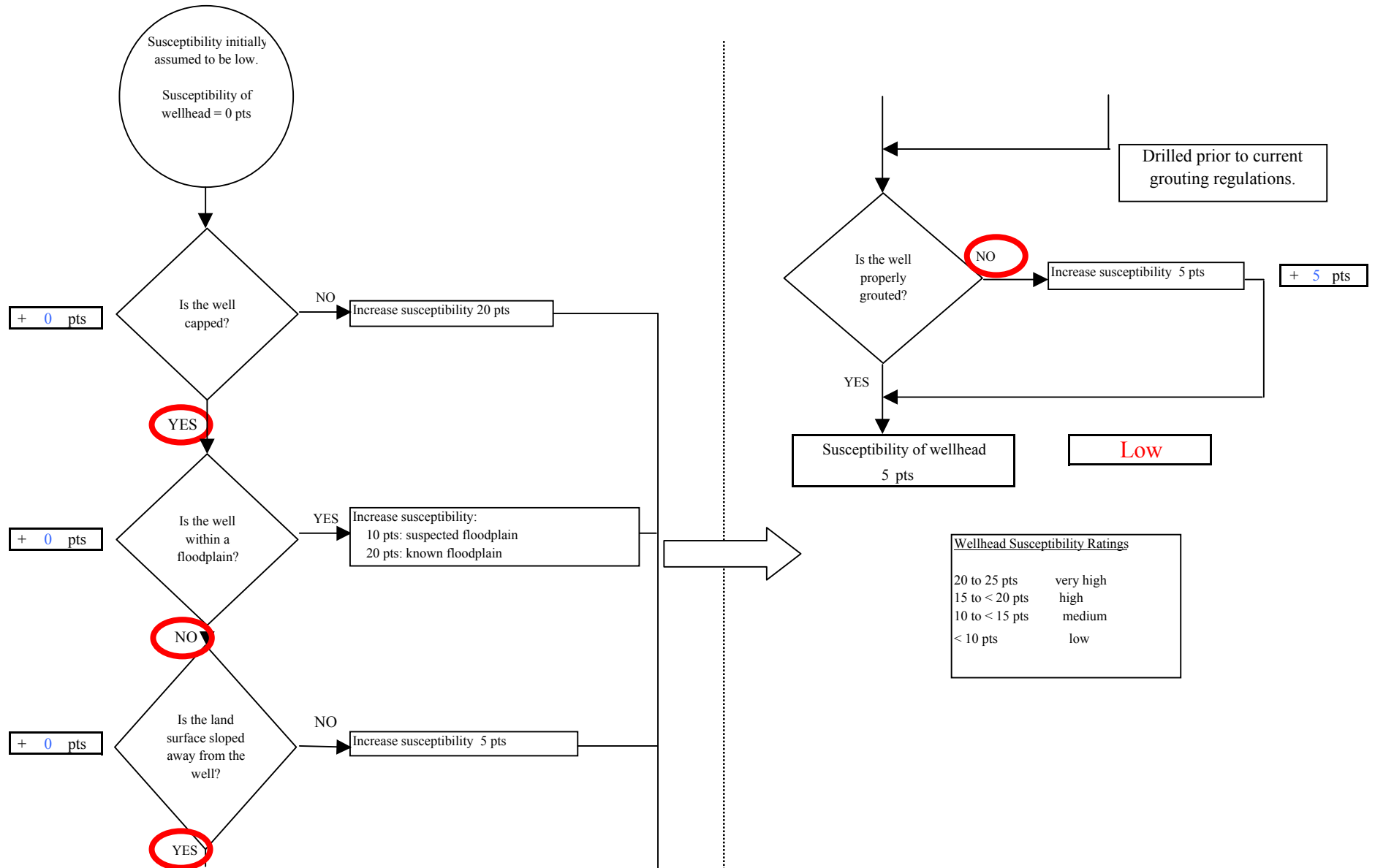


Chart 2. Susceptibility of the aquifer - USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area

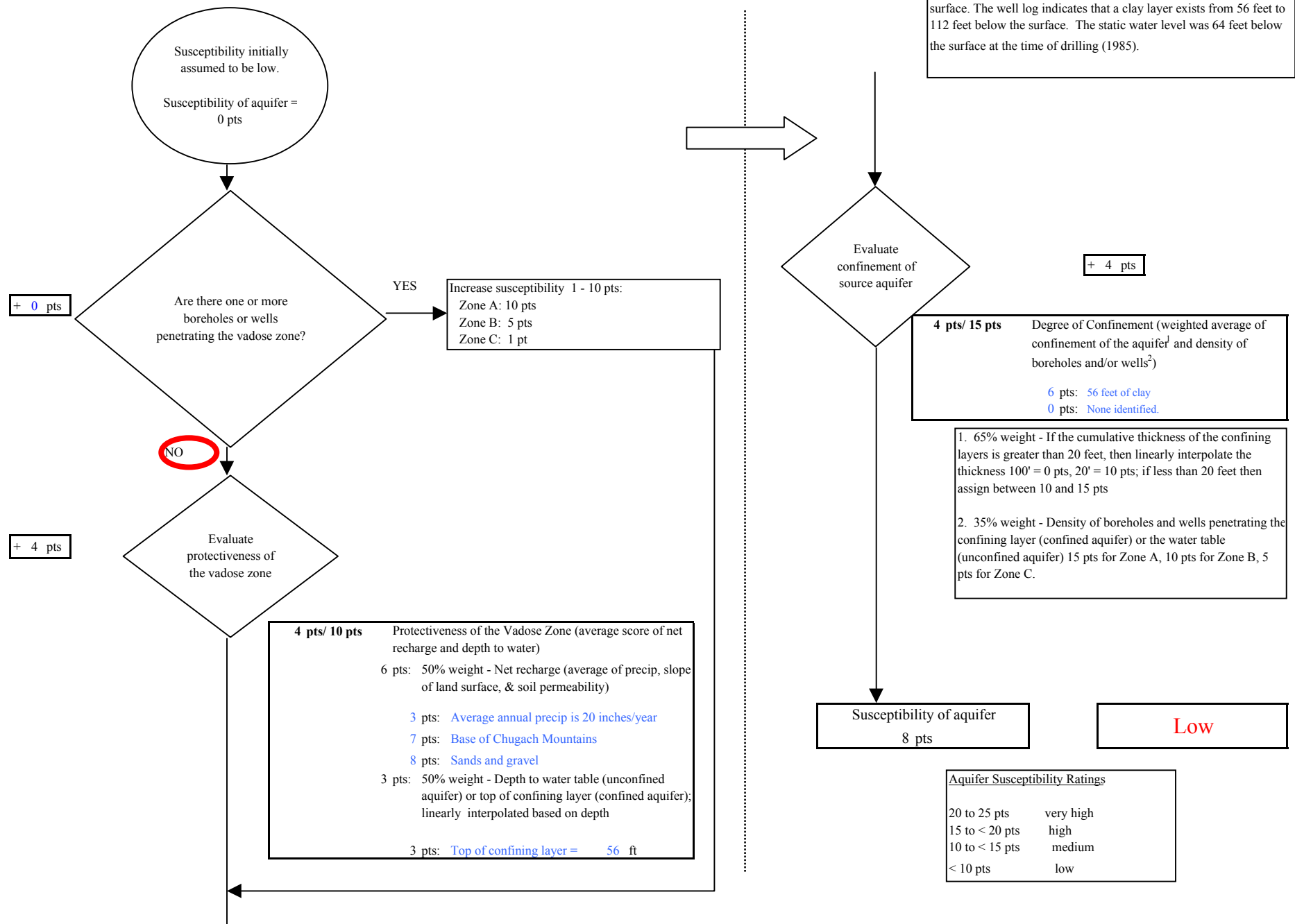


Chart 3. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Bacteria & Viruses

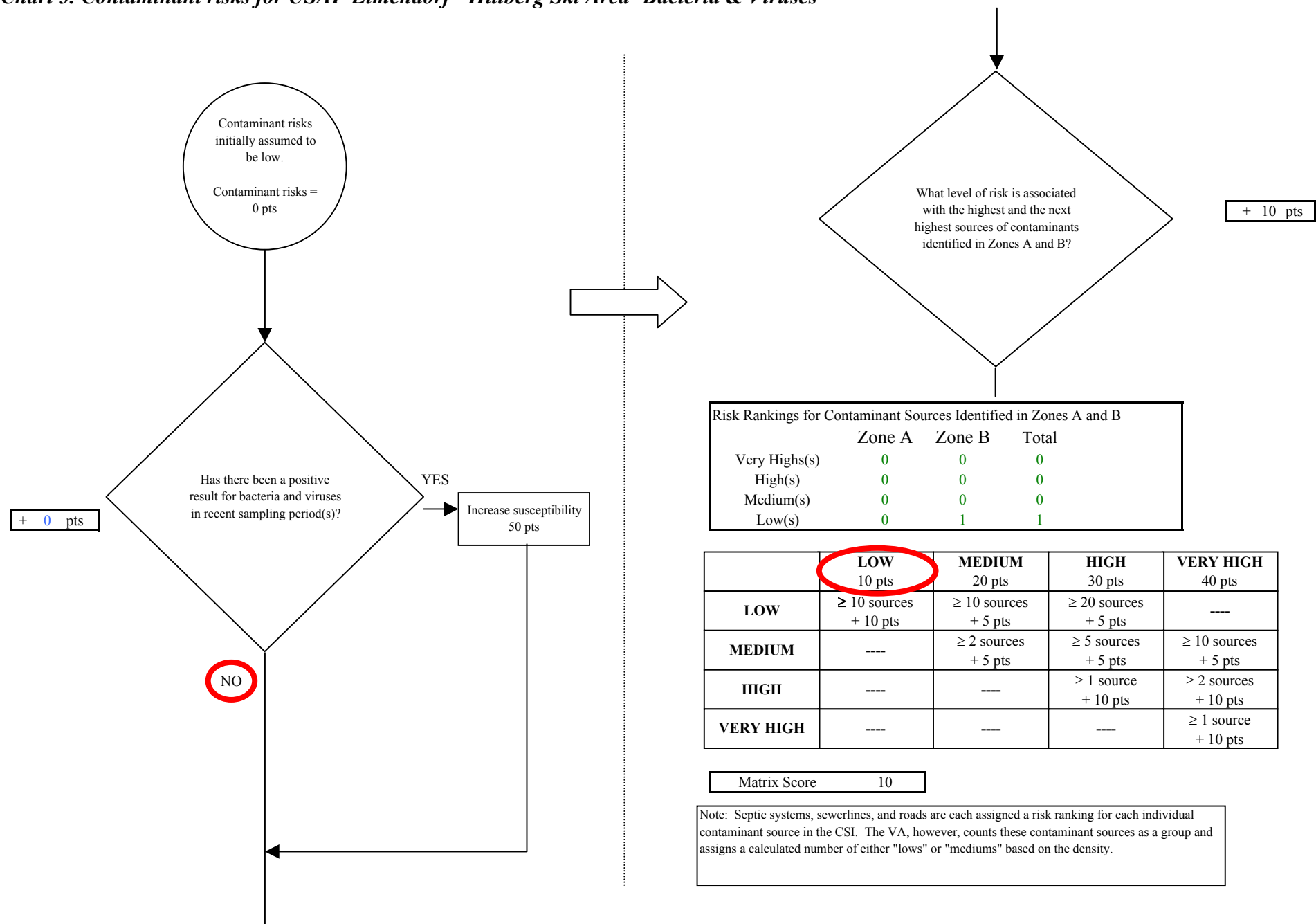
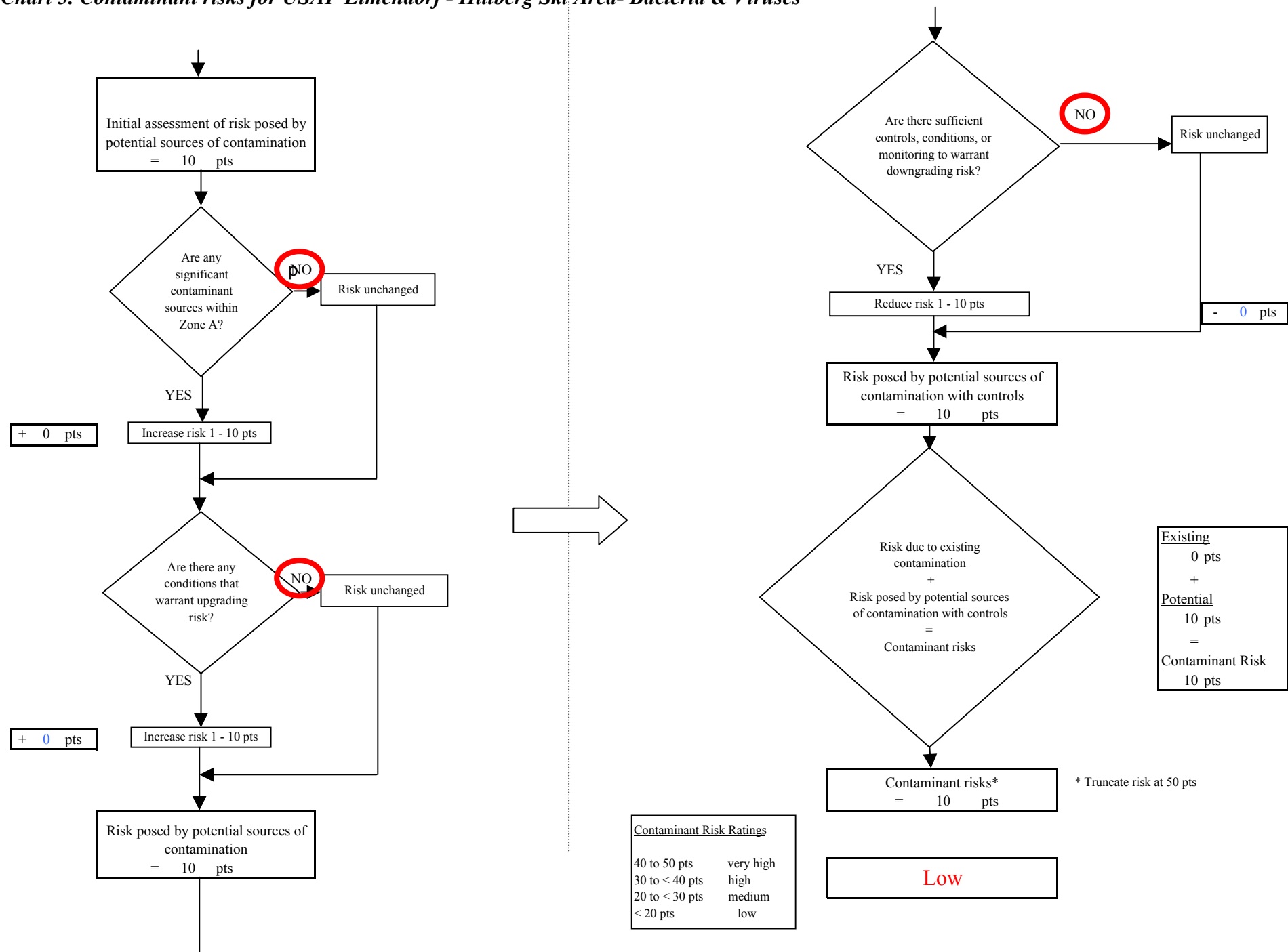
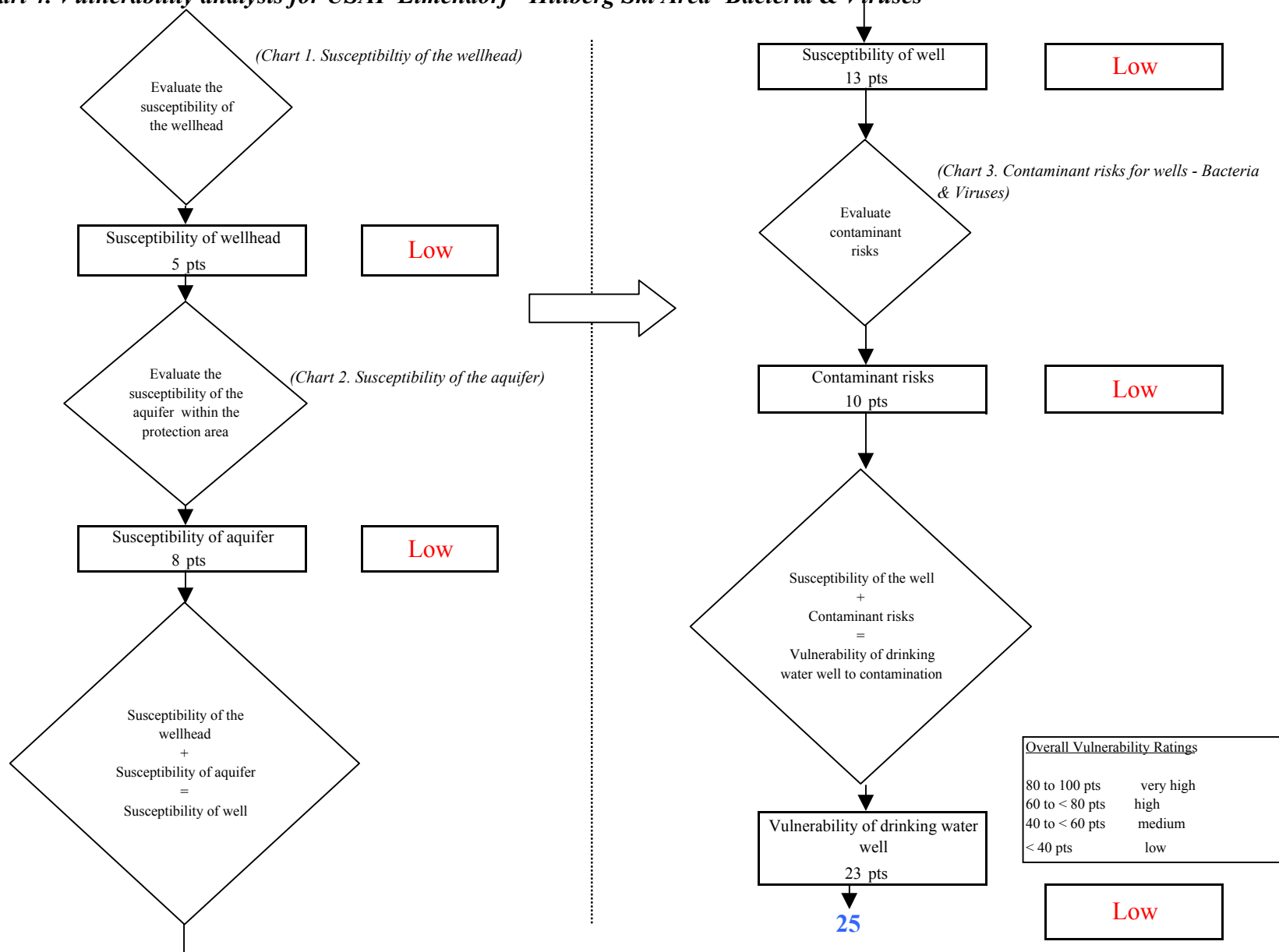




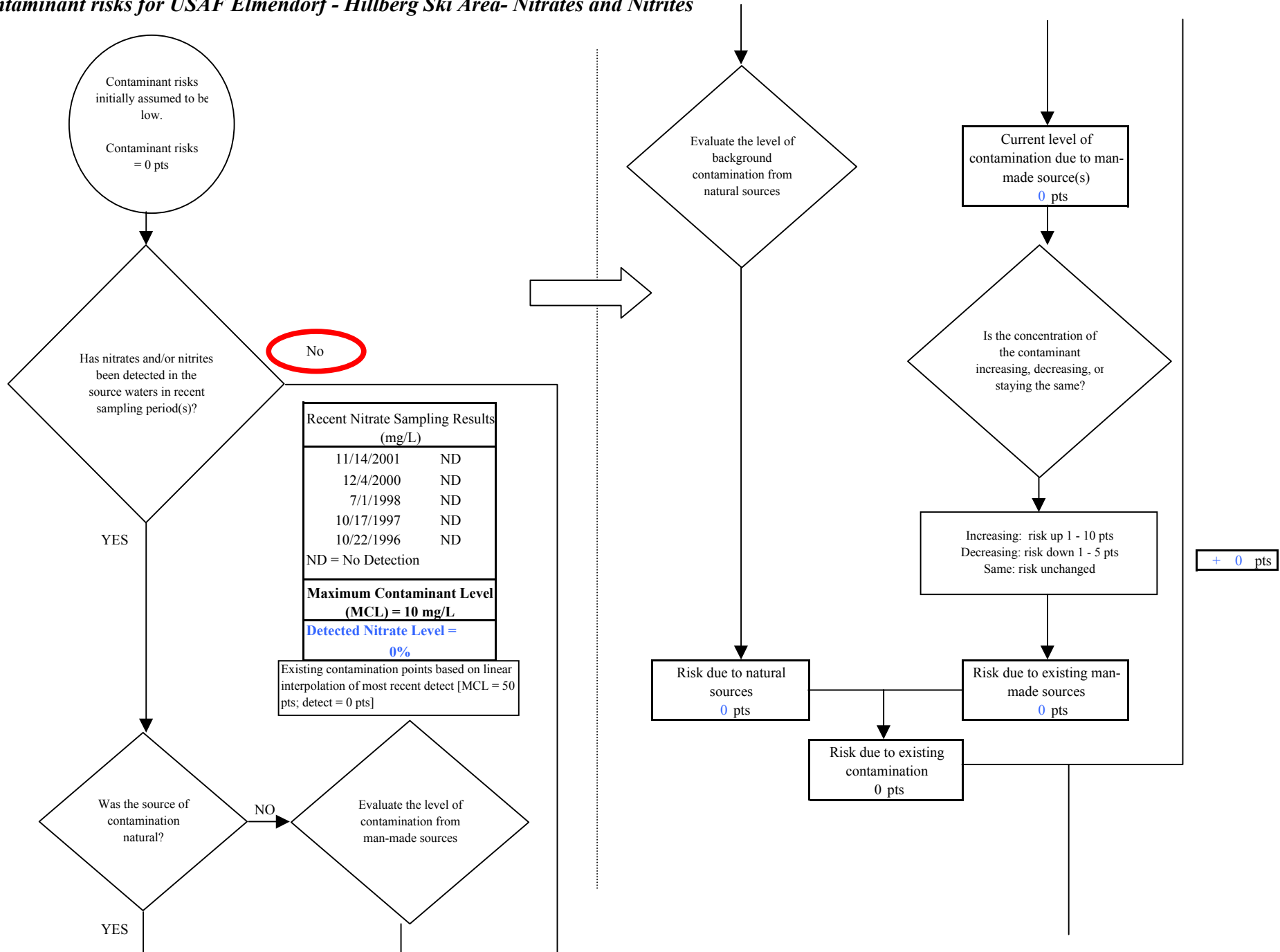
Chart 3. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Bacteria & Viruses



**Chart 4. Vulnerability analysis for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Bacteria & Viruses**



**Chart 5. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Nitrates and Nitrites**



**Chart 5. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Nitrates and Nitrites**

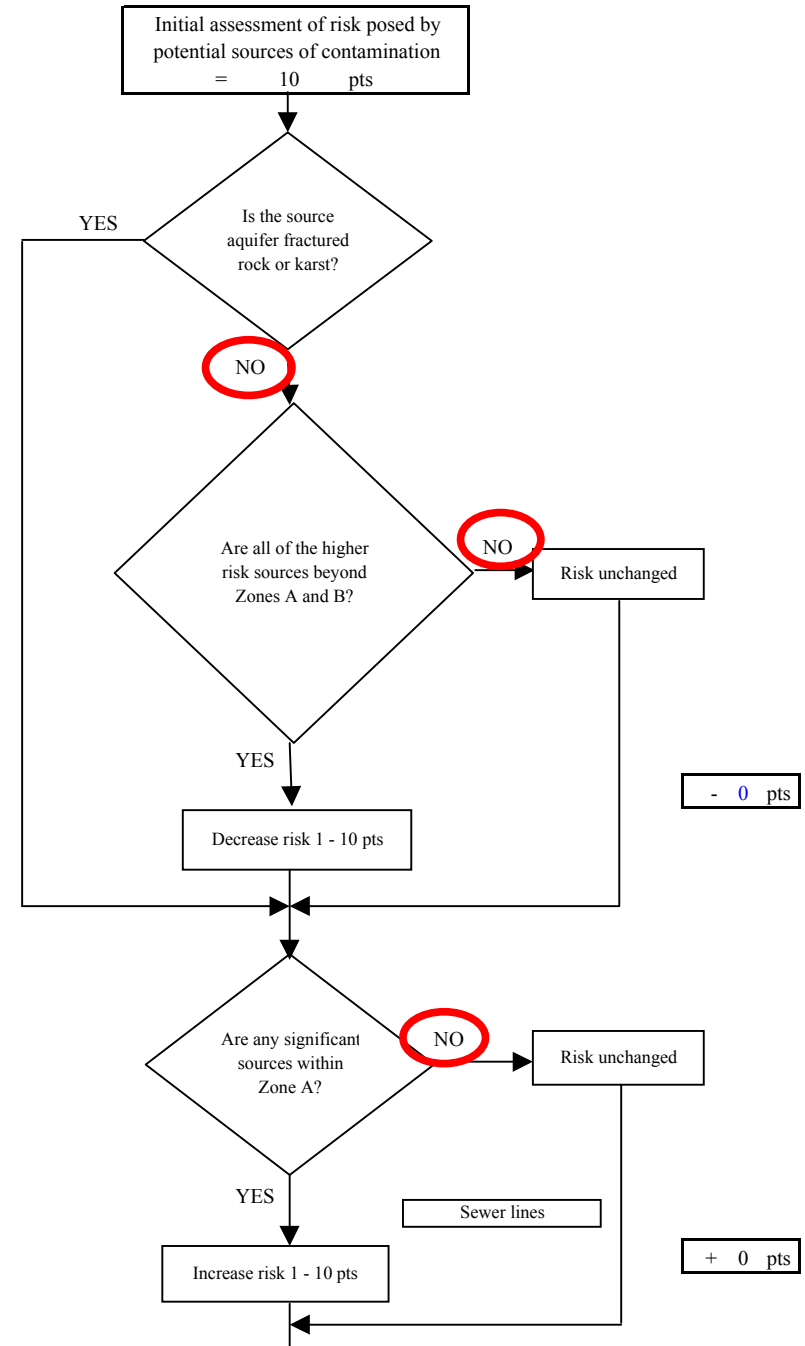
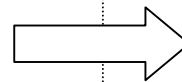
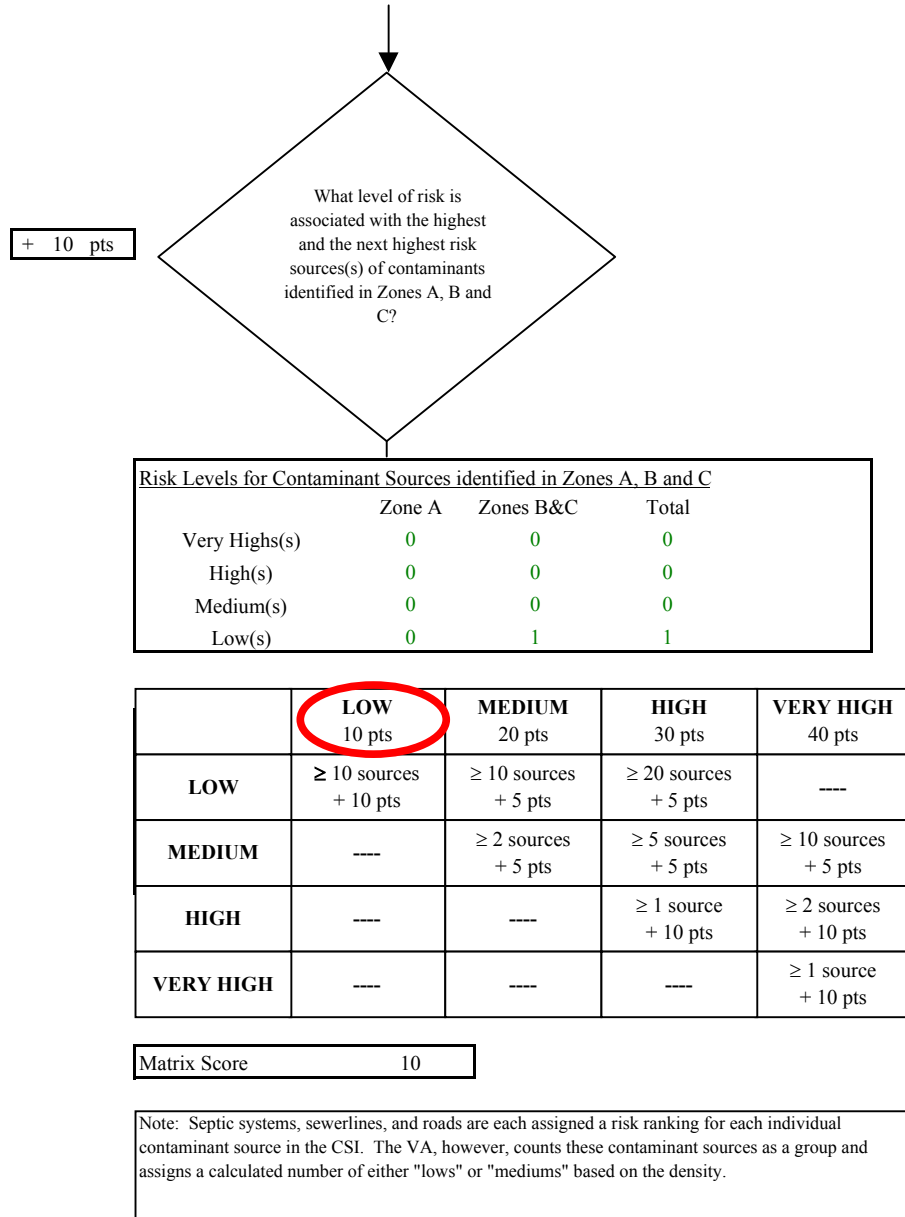
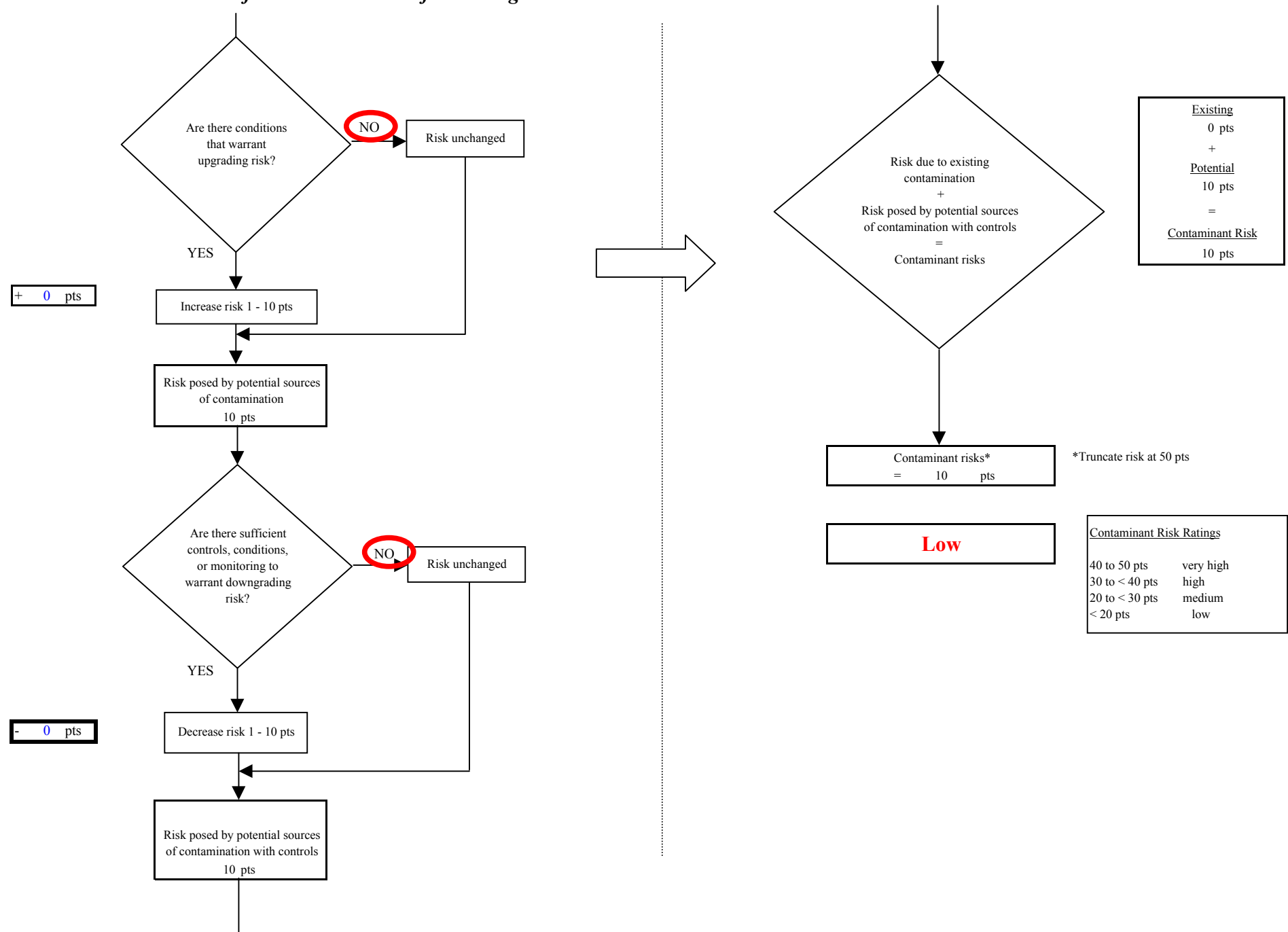
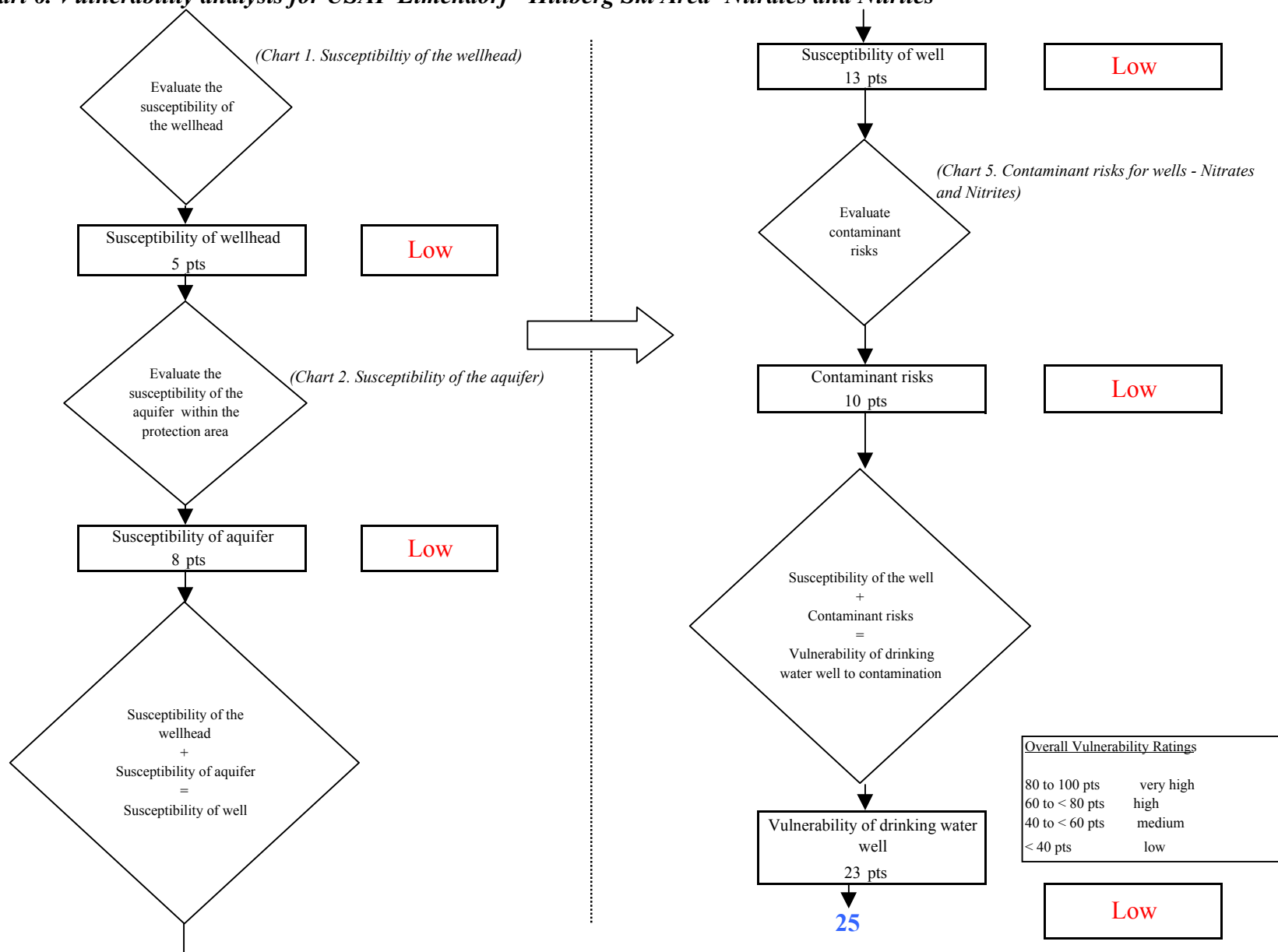


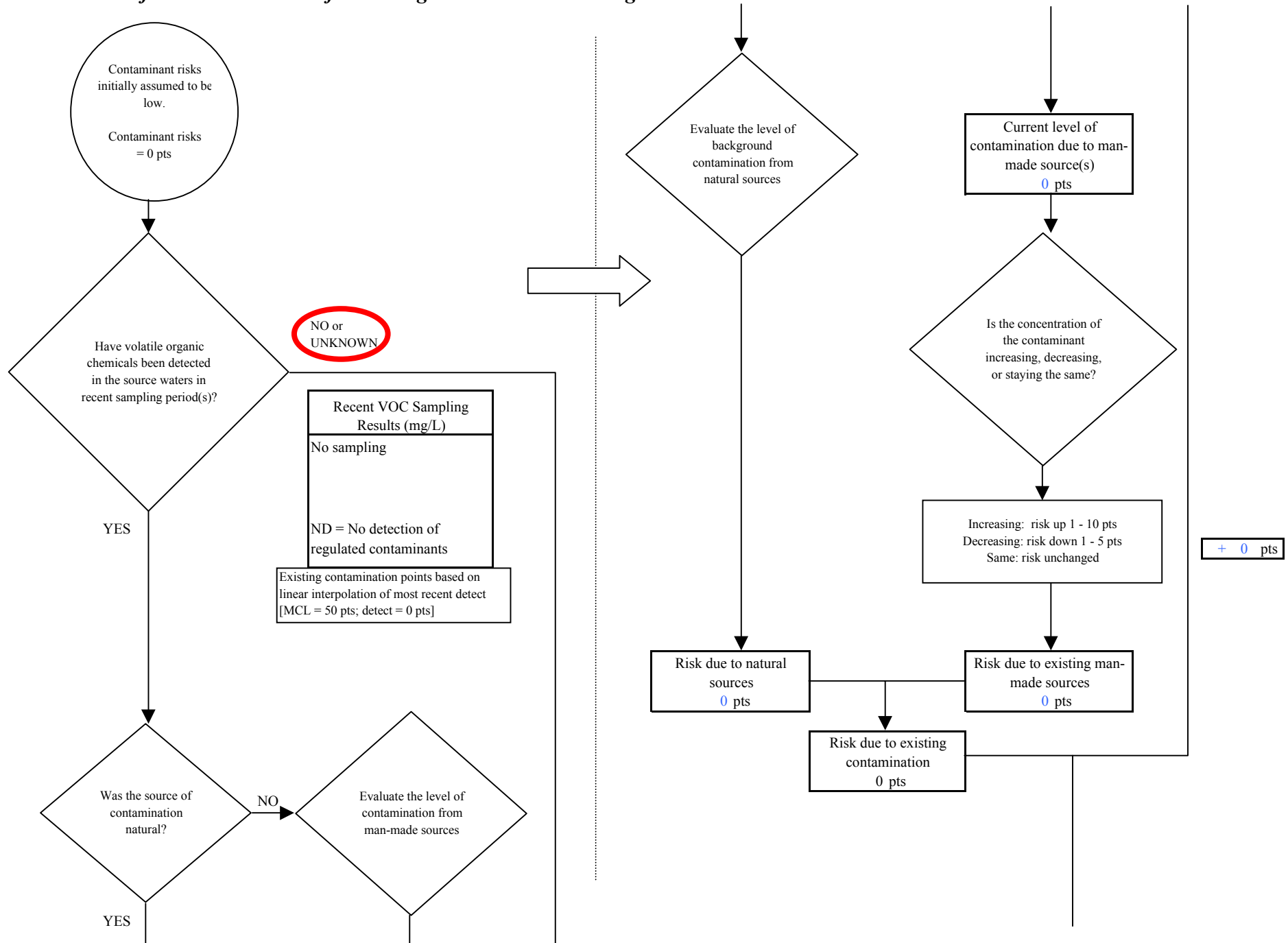
Chart 5. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Nitrates and Nitrites



**Chart 6. Vulnerability analysis for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Nitrates and Nitrites**



**Chart 7. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Volatile Organic Chemicals**





**Chart 7. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Volatile Organic Chemicals**

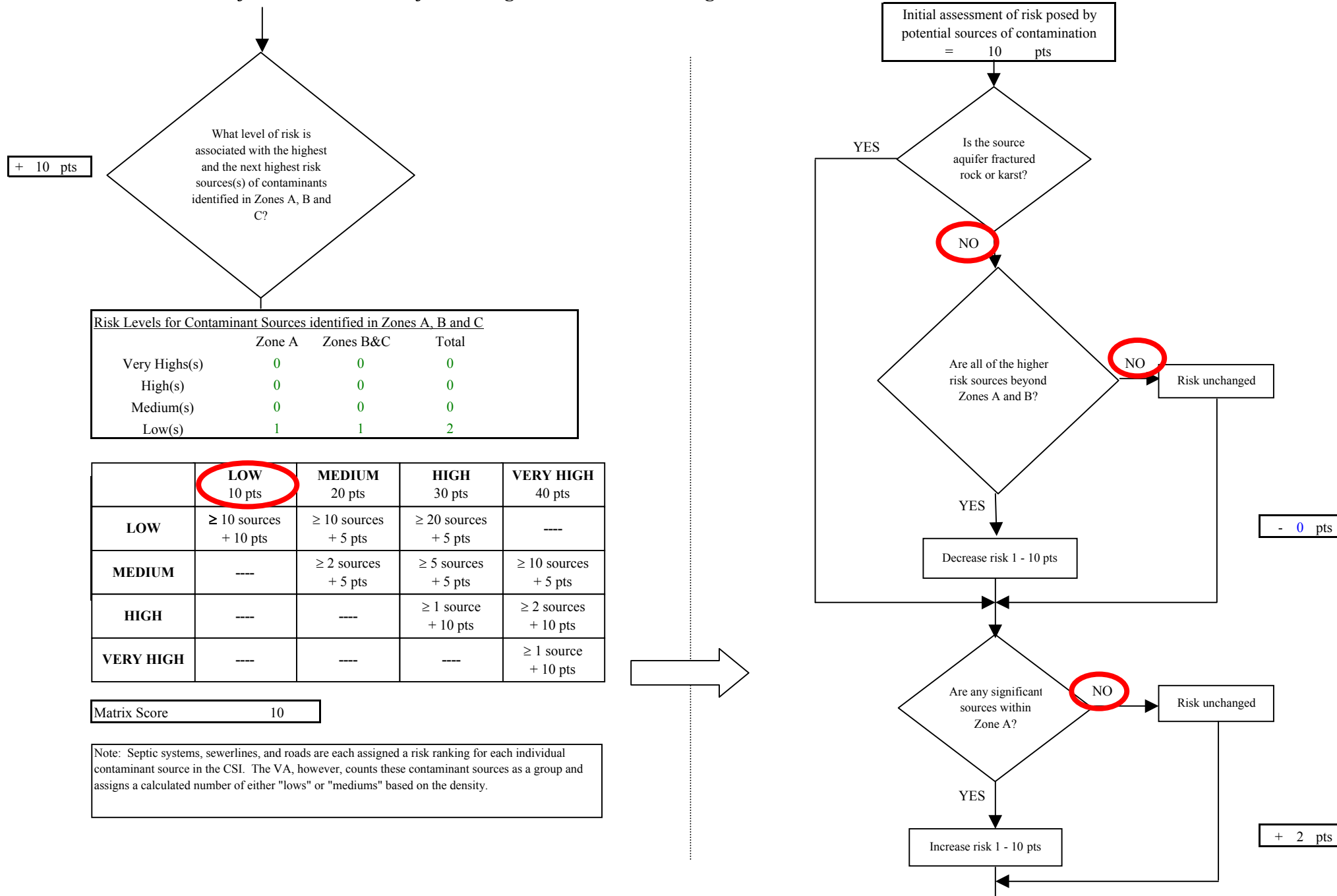
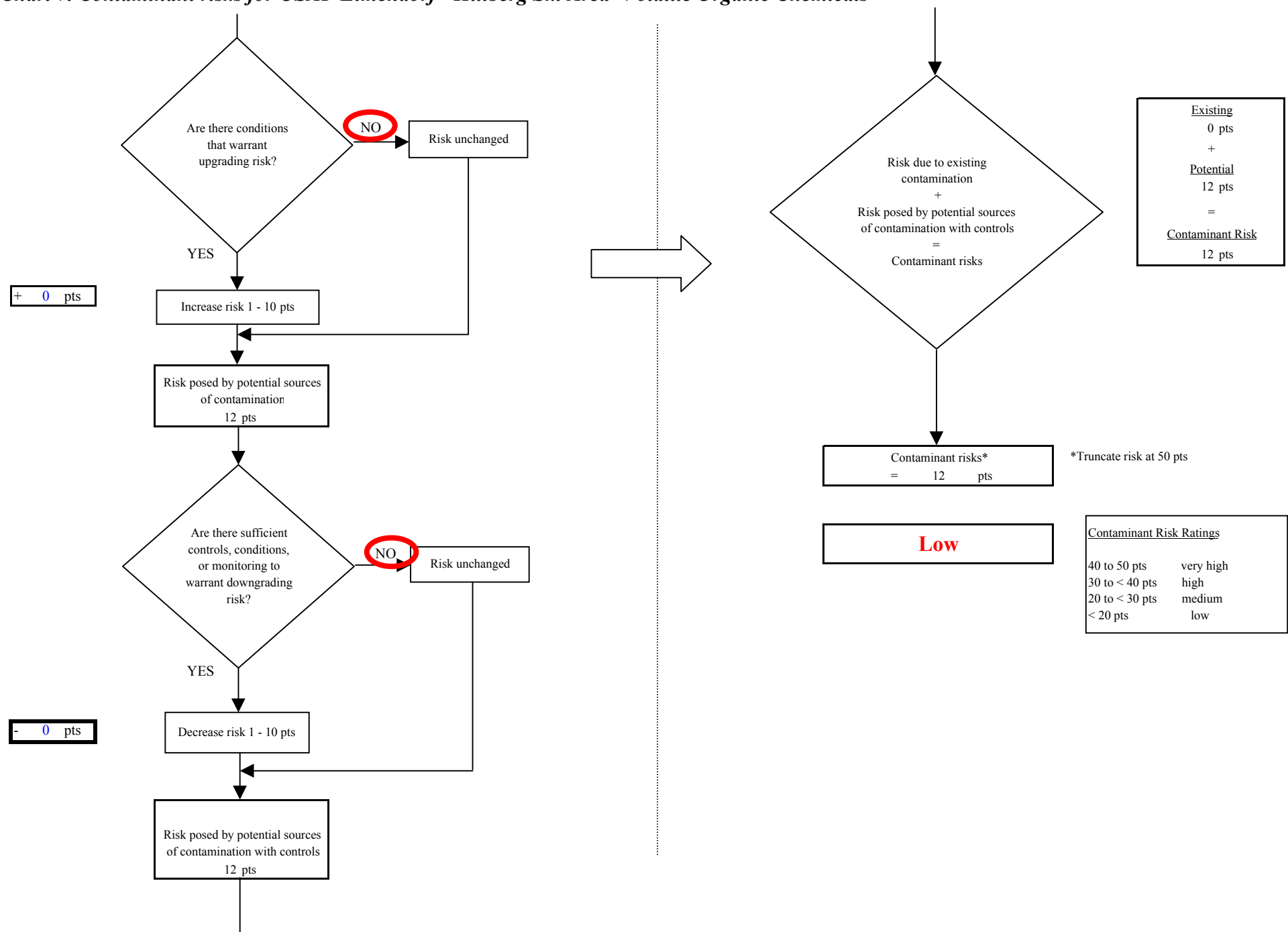


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Volatile Organic Chemicals



**Chart 8. Vulnerability analysis for USAF Elmendorf - Hillberg Ski Area- Volatile Organic Chemicals**

