

Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and
Vulnerability Assessment for
Denali RV Park
Drinking Water System,
Healy, Alaska
PWSID # 391443

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT # 306
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

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By Ecology & Environment, Inc.

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August 2002

The Drinking Water Protection 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 (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. If you have any additional information that may affect the results of this assessment, please contact the Program Coordinator of DWPP, (907) 269-7521.

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Source Water Assessment for Denali RV Park Source of Public Drinking Water, Healy, Alaska

By Ecology & Environment, Inc.

Drinking Water Protection Program Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Denali RV Park is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well in Healy, Alaska. Identified potential and current sources of contaminants for Denali RV Park public drinking water source include: a paved road. 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 sources for Denali RV Park received a vulnerability rating of **Low** for bacteria and viruses, **Low** for nitrates and nitrites, and **Low** for volatile organic chemicals.

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 owners and/or operators, 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 and 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.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HEALY AREA

Location

The community of Healy (pop. 1,000) is located at approximately 78 miles southwest of Fairbanks, on the George Parks Highway, a few miles north of the entrance to Denali National Park (Figure 1).



Figure 1

Precipitation

The Healy area averages over 15 inches of precipitation per year, with approximately 73 inches of annual snowfall (ACRC 2002).

Topography and Drainage

Healy is located near the confluence of Healy Creek and the Nenana River. The area is dominated by several steep peaks to the south, including Mount Healy, with somewhat gentler terrain to the north. The town itself has relatively flat topography. Drainage is typically towards the Nenana River or one of its tributaries.

Groundwater Use

The majority of residents in Healy have private water wells and septic systems; others haul water from a

community well source. There are no municipal water or sewage facilities (ADCED 2002).

Geology and Soils

The surficial geology of the Healy area consists mainly of glacial outwash gravel of various ages, together with some recent river terrace gravels. Nenana Gravel, a poorly-consolidated conglomerate and coarse sandstone with interbedded mudflow deposits and thin claystone and lignite, is found in the mountainous terrain northeast of Healy (Wahrhaftig 1970).

DENALI RV PARK PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

Denali RV Park is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well near the Parks Highway milepost 245.

According to the well log completed for the water system, installation of the well occurred on October 8, 1992 to a total depth of approximately 261 feet below ground surface. The most recent Sanitary Survey (5/27/99) indicates 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 land surface is also appropriately sloped away from the well providing adequate surface water drainage. The well apparently was not grouted according to ADEC regulations (grouting was not required prior to 1993). Proper grouting provides added protection against contaminants travelling along the well casing and into source waters. The aquifer is assumed to be confined based on the well depth, and static water level and lithologies encountered during drilling of the well.

This system operates from May 15 to September 15 and serves approximately 21 residents and more than 200 non-residents.

DENALI RV PARK 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. Some areas are more likely to allow contamination to reach the well than others. 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

(DWPA). Because a release of contaminants within the DWPA are most likely to impact the drinking water well, this area will serve as the focus for voluntary protection efforts.

An analytical calculation was used to determine the size and shape of the DWPA. The input parameters describing the attributes of the aquifer in this calculation were adopted from the U.S. Geological Survey (*Patrick et al. 1989*). Additional methods were also used to take into account any uncertainties in groundwater flow and aquifer characteristics to arrive at a meaningful DWPA (Please refer to the Guidance Manual for Class B Water Systems for additional information).

The DWPA's established for wells by the ADEC are separated into four zones. These zones correspond to differences in the time-of-travel (TOT) of the water moving through the aquifer to the well. 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 DWPA zones and the calculated time-of-travel for each:

Table 1. Definition of Zones

Zone	Definition
A	¼ the distance to the 2-year TOT
B	Less than the 2-year TOT
C	Less than the 5-year TOT
D	Less than the 10 year TOT

As an example, water moving through the aquifer in Zone B will most likely reach the well in less than 2 years from the time it crosses the outer limit of Zone B.

Zone A also incorporates the area downgradient from the well to take into account the area of the aquifer that is influenced by pumping of the well. Water within the aquifer in Zone A will reach the well in several hours to several months.

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 Denali RV Park 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 water system assessments, three categories of drinking water contaminants were inventoried. They include:

- Bacteria and viruses;
- Nitrates and/or nitrites; and
- Volatile organic chemicals.

Inventoried potential sources of contamination within Zones A through Zone D were associated with residential and light industrial type activities. The sources are summarized in the tables in Appendix B of the Guidance Manual.

RANKING OF CONTAMINANT RISKS

Once the potential and existing sources of contamination have been identified, they are 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. Further, contaminant risks are 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 DENALI RV PARK 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 has been analyzed and an overall vulnerability score of 0 to 100 is 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)

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.

Table 2 shows the Overall Susceptibility score and rating for Denali RV Park (see Charts 1 and 2).

Table 2. Natural Susceptibility - Susceptibility of the Wellhead and Aquifer to Contamination

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	5	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	4	Low
Natural Susceptibility	9	Low

Contaminant risks to a drinking water source depend on the type, number or density, and distribution of contaminant sources. This data has been derived from an examination of existing or historical contamination that has been detected at the drinking water source through routine sampling. It also evaluates potential sources of contamination. Table 3 summarizes the Contaminant Risks for each category of drinking water contaminants (see Charts 3, 5, and 7).

Table 3. Contaminant Risks

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	12	Low
Nitrates and/or Nitrites	19	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	12	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 (see Charts 4, 6, and 8).

Table 4. Overall Vulnerability of Denali RV Park to Contamination by Category

Category	Score	Rating
Bacteria and Viruses	20	Low
Nitrates and Nitrites	30	Low
Volatile Organic Chemicals	20	Low

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

Only a small amount of bacteria and viruses are required to endanger public health. If bacteria and viruses have been detected during recent water sampling of the system at Denali RV Park, the result is a maximum score on Chart 3.

The sampling history for Denali RV Park well indicates that nitrates and/or nitrites are found in natural background concentration at this site, as elsewhere throughout Alaska. Nitrate concentrations in uncontaminated groundwater are typically less than 2 milligrams per liter (mg/L) and are derived primarily from the decomposition of organic matter in soils [Wang, Strelakos, Jokela, 2000]. Existing nitrate concentration in the Denali RV Park well is approximately 0.7 mg/L or 7% of the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 10mg/L. The MCL is the maximum level of contaminant that is allowed to exist in drinking water and still be consumed by humans without harmful health effects. Due to the high solubility and weak retention by soil, nitrates are very mobile, moving at approximately the same rate as water. Though existing nitrate contamination was detected at the site, concentrations remain at safe levels with respect to human health (See Chart 5 - Contaminant Risks for Nitrates and/or Nitrites in Appendix D).

Class B Public Water systems are not required to test

for volatile organic chemicals (VOCs); therefore, no score for pre-existing contamination has been assigned. The vulnerability score for VOCs reflects the potential for contamination from the sources indicated on Table 4 in Appendix B.

SUMMARY

A *Source Water Assessment* has been completed for the sources of public drinking water serving Denali RV Park. The overall vulnerability of this source to contamination is **Low** for bacteria and viruses, **Low** 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 Denali RV Park 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 Denali RV Park public drinking water source.

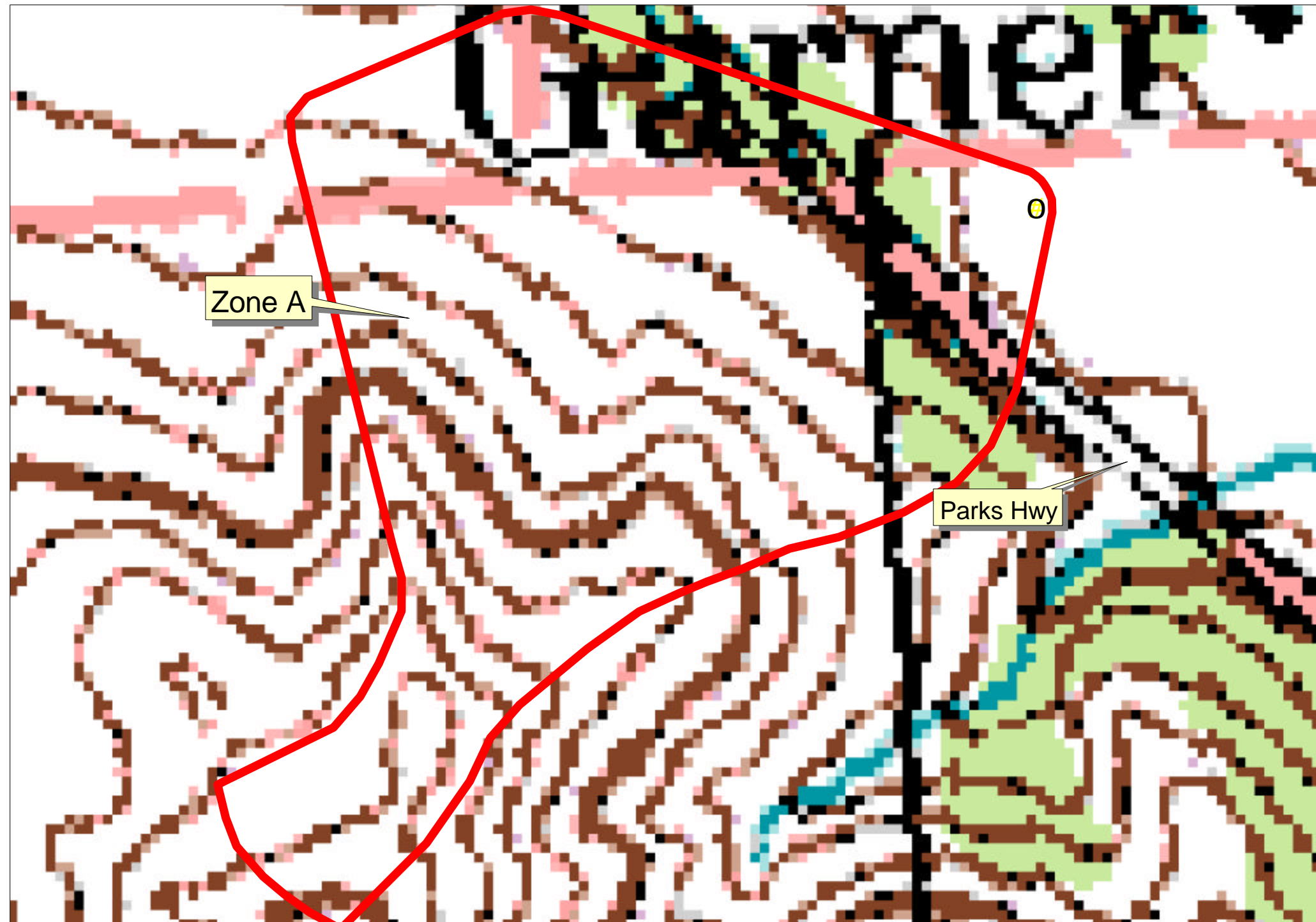
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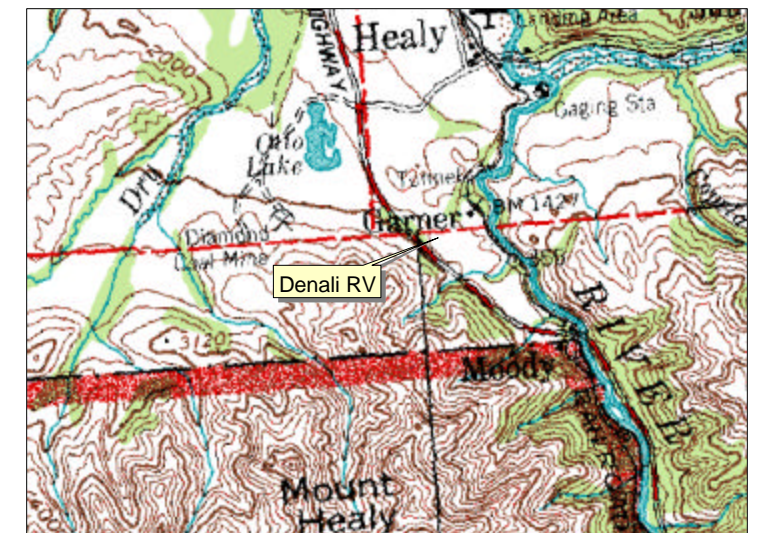
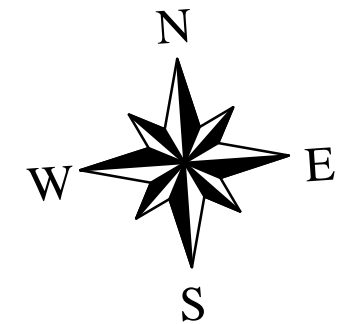
APPENDIX A

Denali RV Park Drinking Water Protection Area (Map 1)

Drinking Water Protection Area for Denali RV Park



- Denali RV Well
- Zone A (Few Months Travel Time)



1 0 1 Miles

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Map 1

APPENDIX B

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Denali RV Park (Tables 1-4)

<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	GEORGE PARK'S HWY	2	

Table 2

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Denali RV Park
Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

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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>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	GEORGE PARK'S HWY	2	

Table 3

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Denali RV Park
Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

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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>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	GEORGE PARK'S HWY	2	

Table 4

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Denali RV Park
Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals*

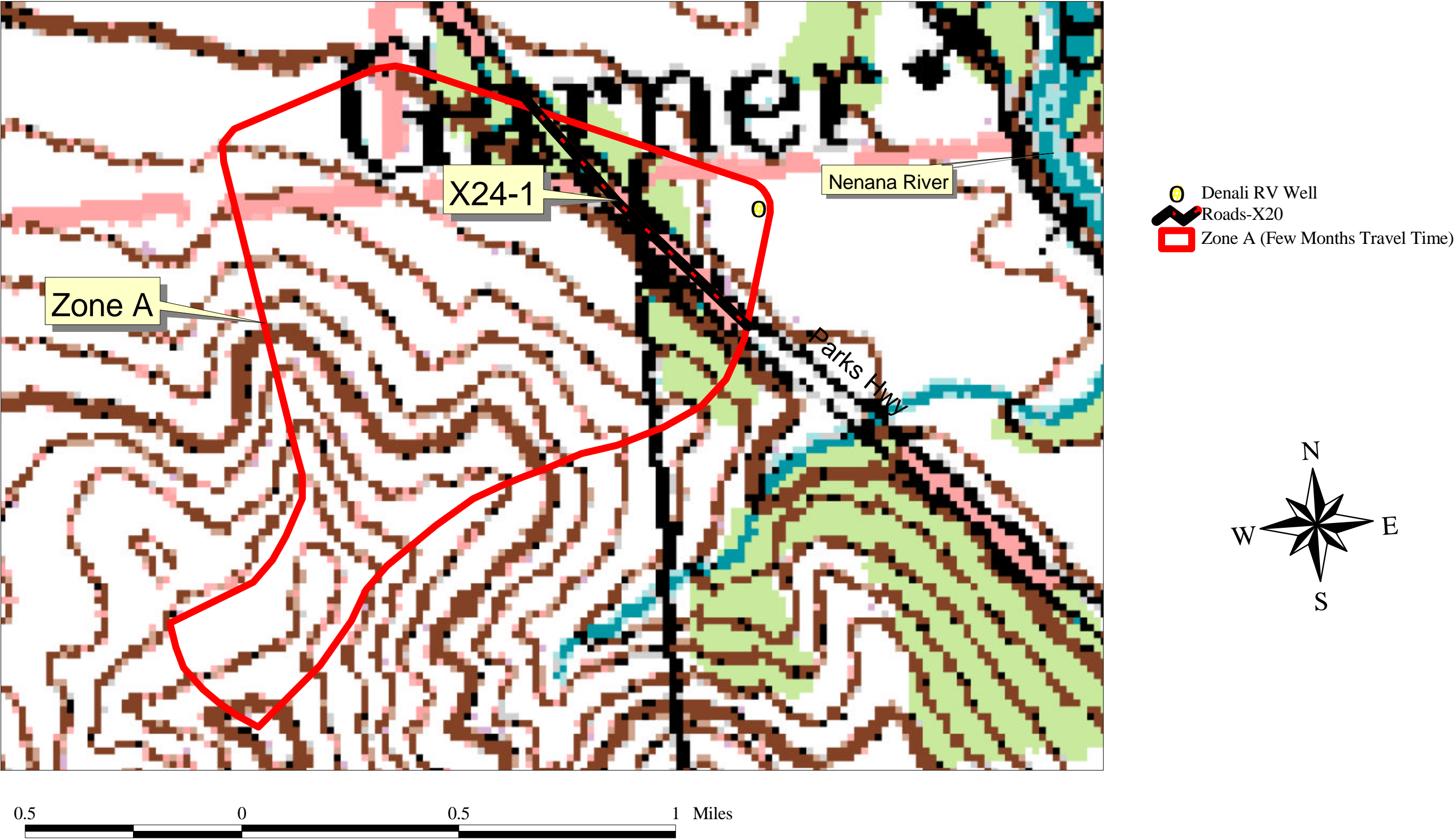
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<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	GEORGE PARK'S HWY	2	

APPENDIX C

Denali RV Park Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Map 2)

Drinking Water Protection Area for Denali RV Park and Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination



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Map 2

APPENDIX D

Vulnerability Analysis for Denali RV Park Public Drinking Water Source (Charts 1-8)

Chart 1. Susceptibility of the wellhead - Denali RV Park

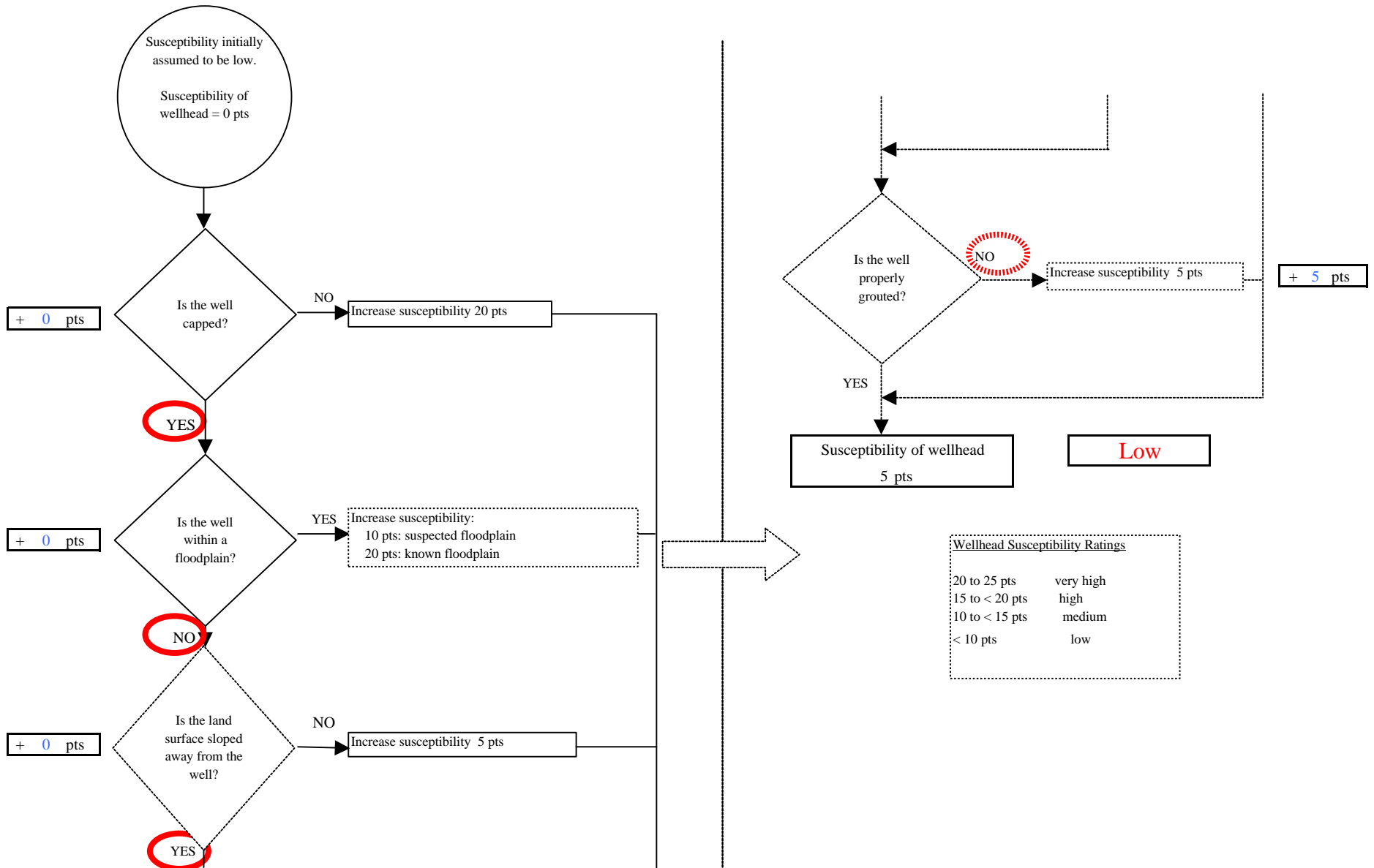


Chart 2. Susceptibility of the aquifer - Denali RV Park

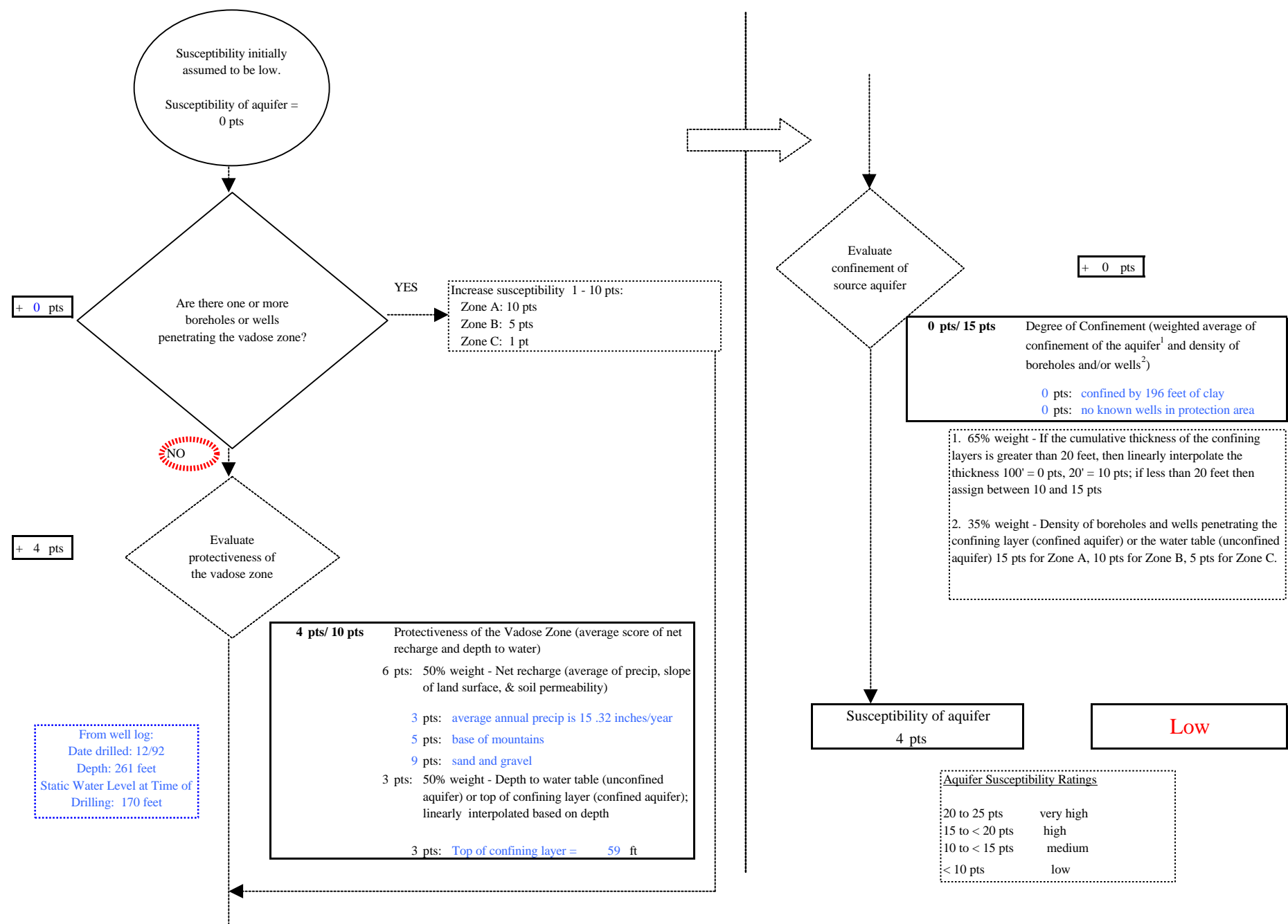


Chart 3. Contaminant risks for *Denali RV Park - Bacteria & Viruses*

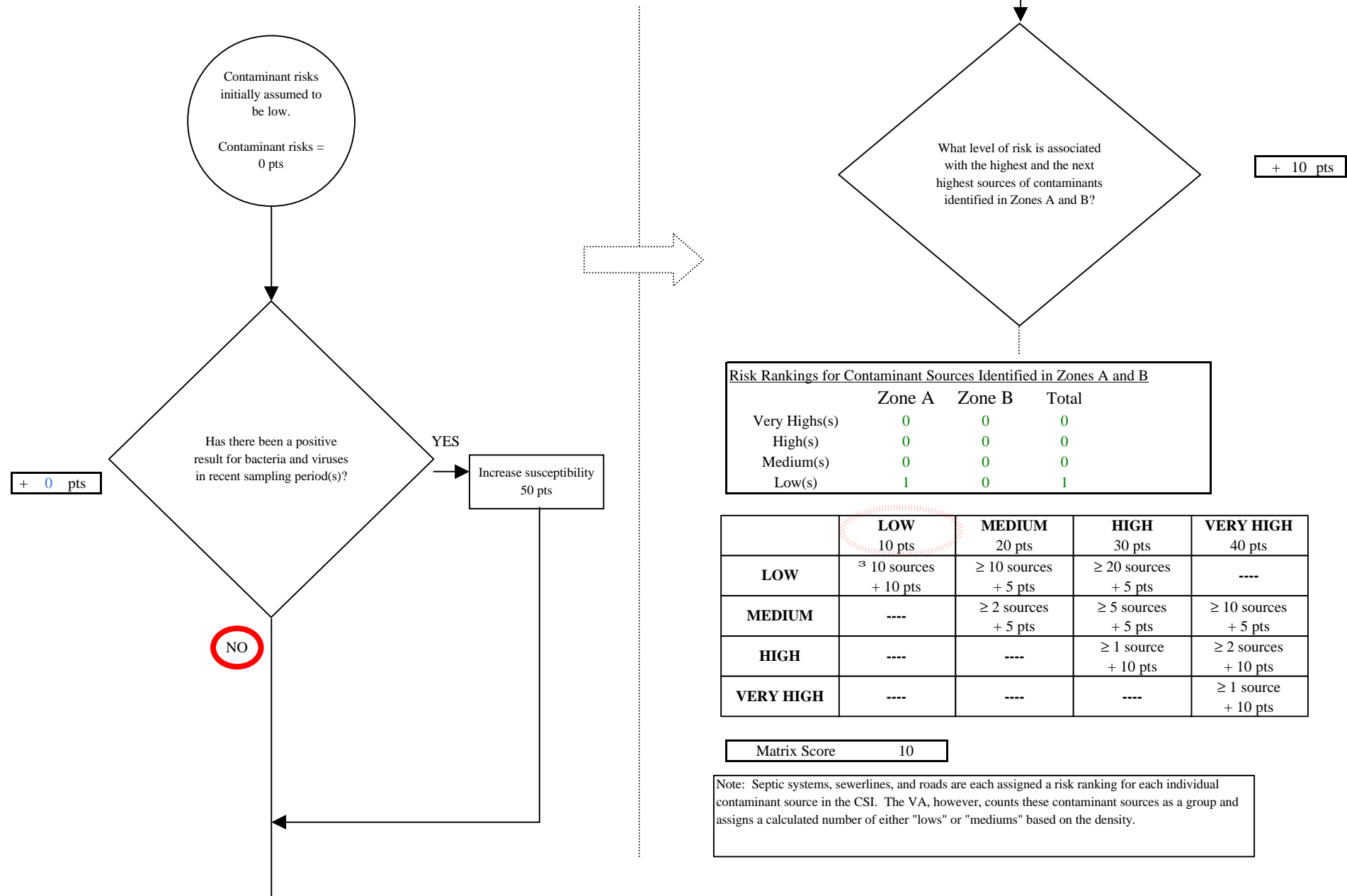


Chart 3. Contaminant risks for Denali RV Park - Bacteria & Viruses

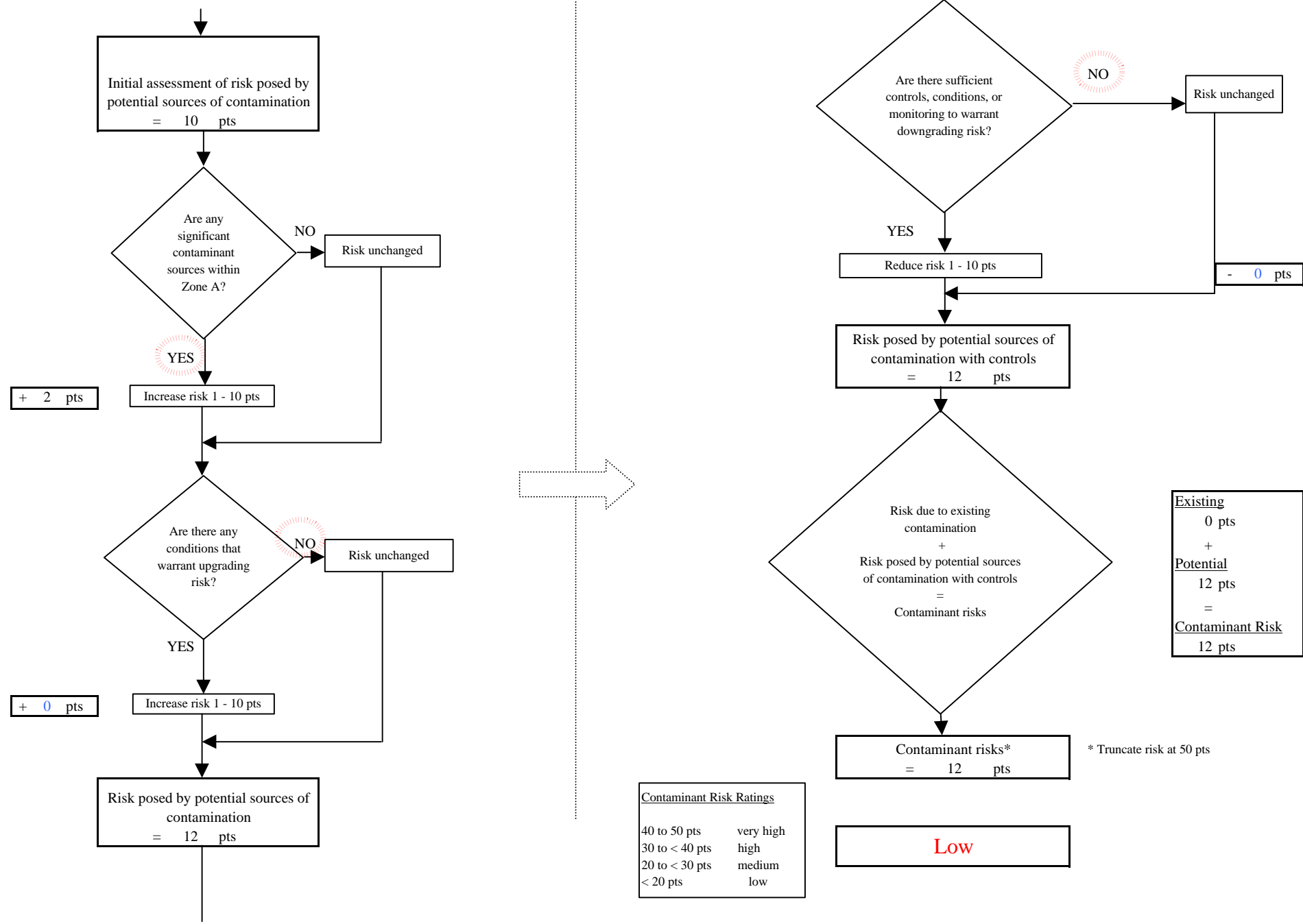


Chart 4. Vulnerability analysis for *Denali RV Park* - Bacteria & Viruses

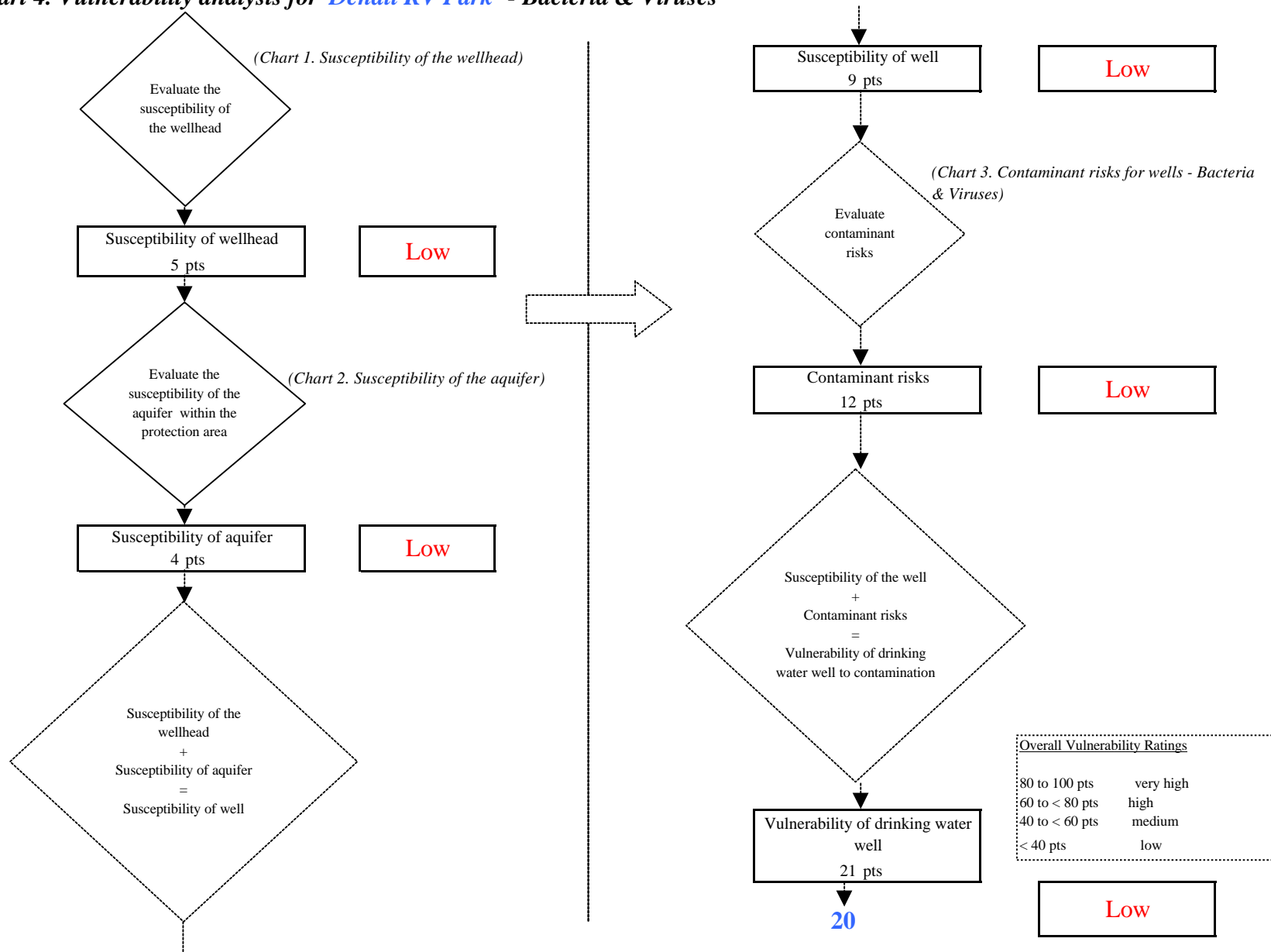


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for *Denali RV Park* - Nitrates and Nitrites

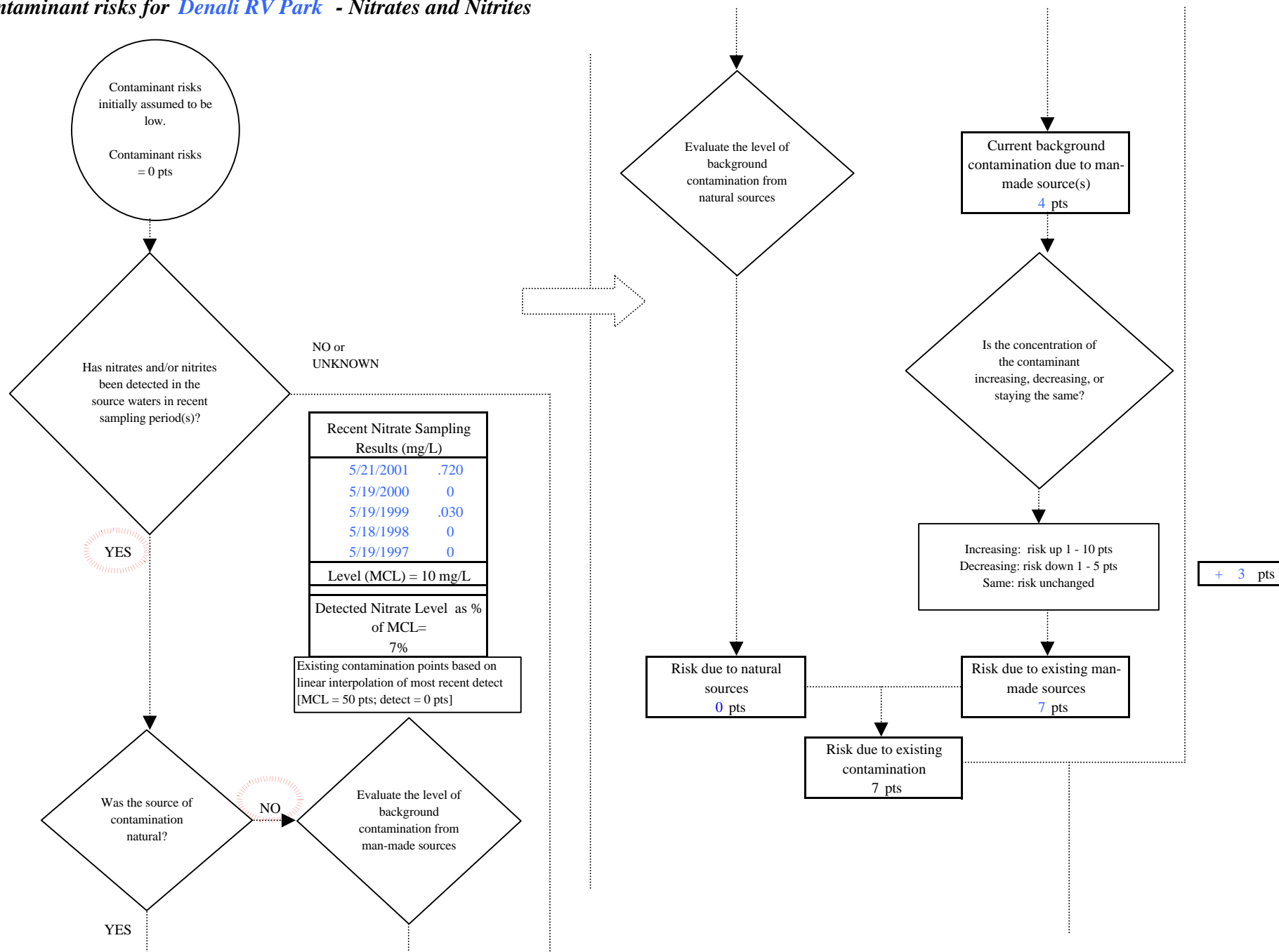


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for Denali RV Park - Nitrates and Nitrites

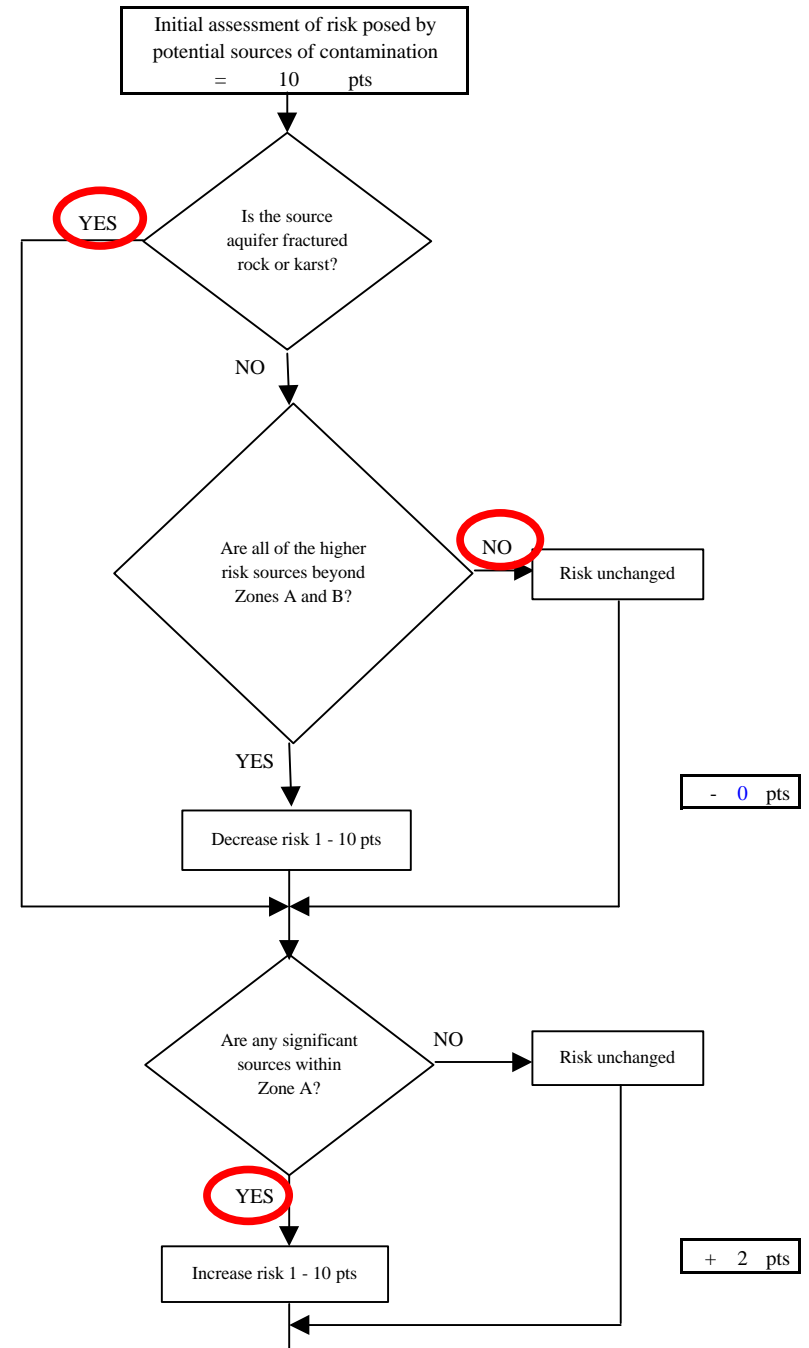
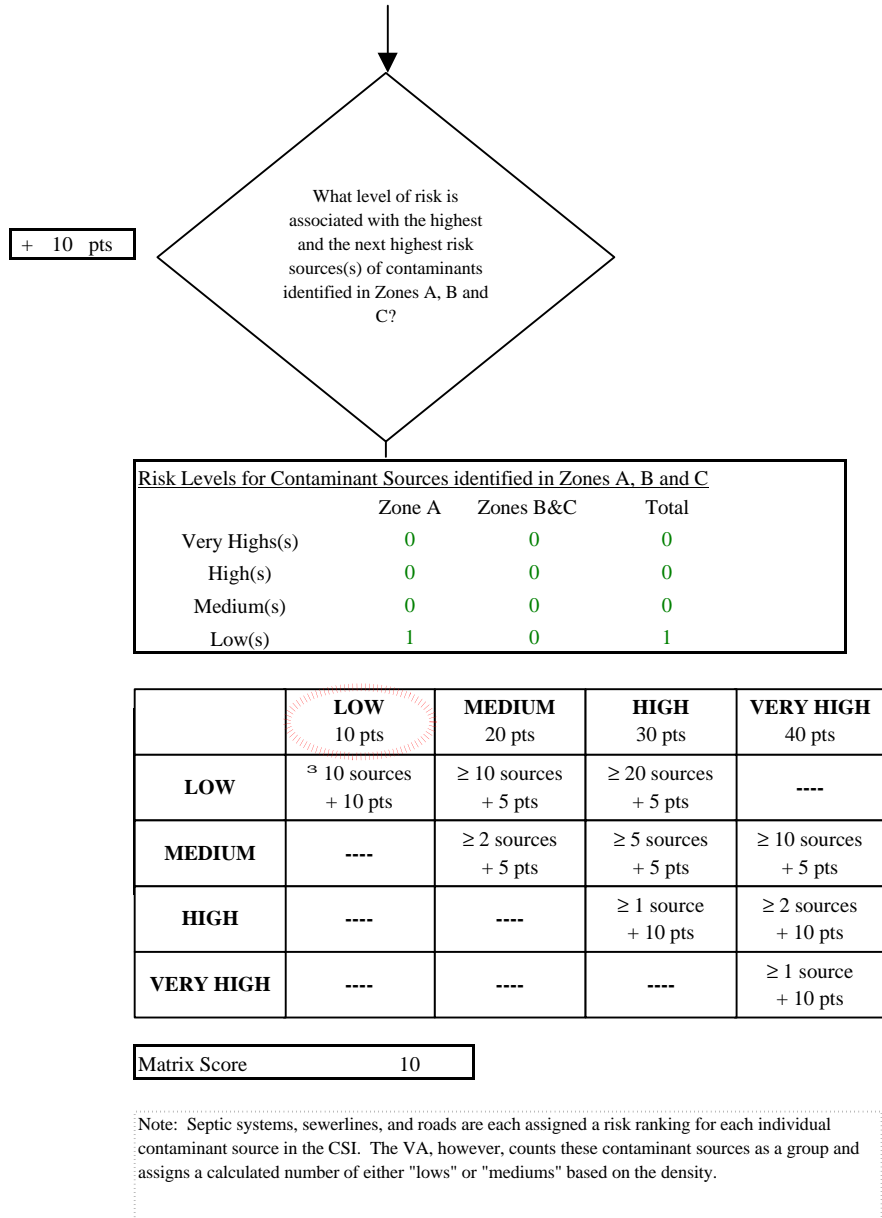


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for Denali RV Park - Nitrates and Nitrites

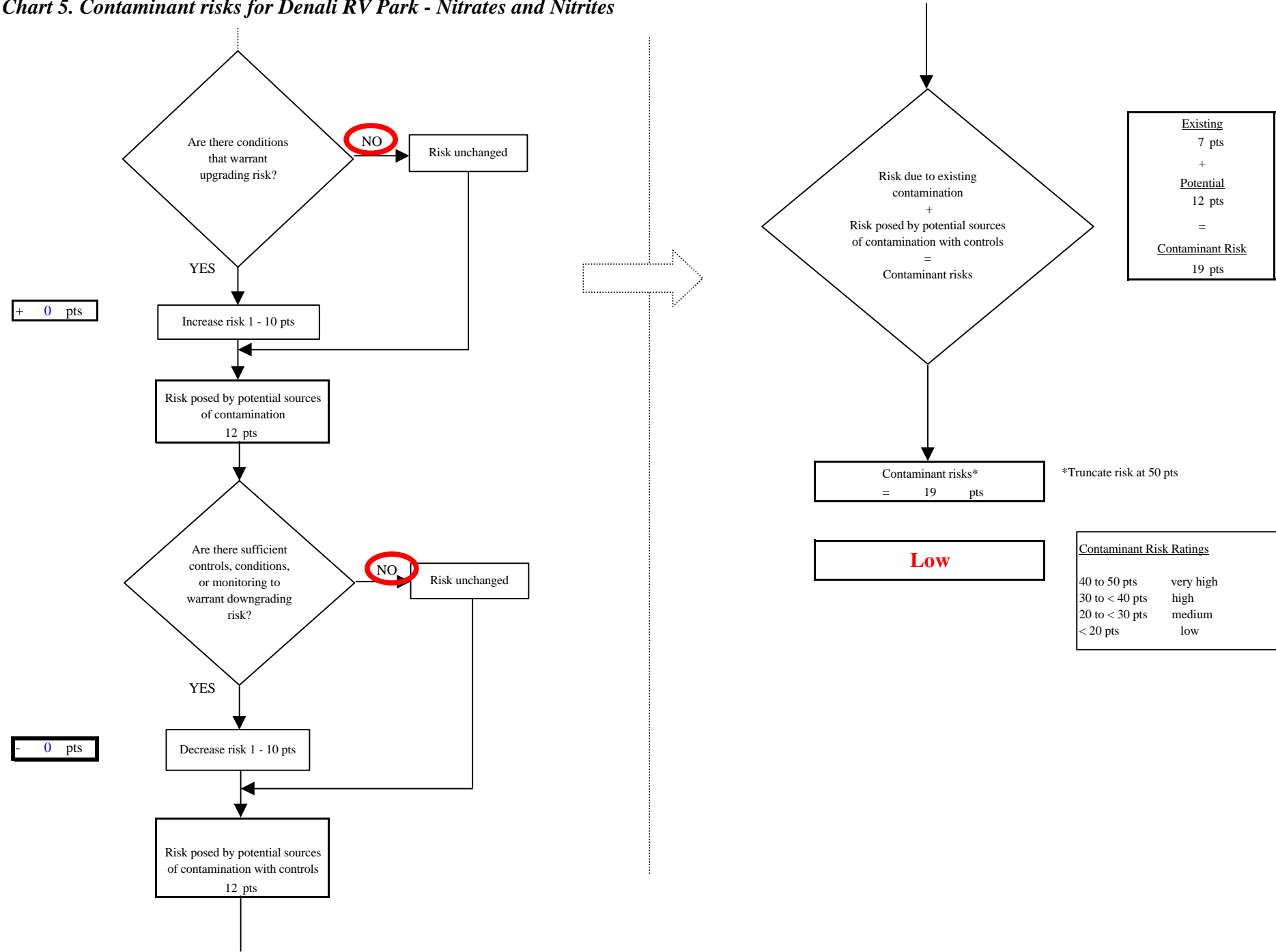


Chart 6. Vulnerability analysis for *Denali RV Park* - Nitrates and Nitrites

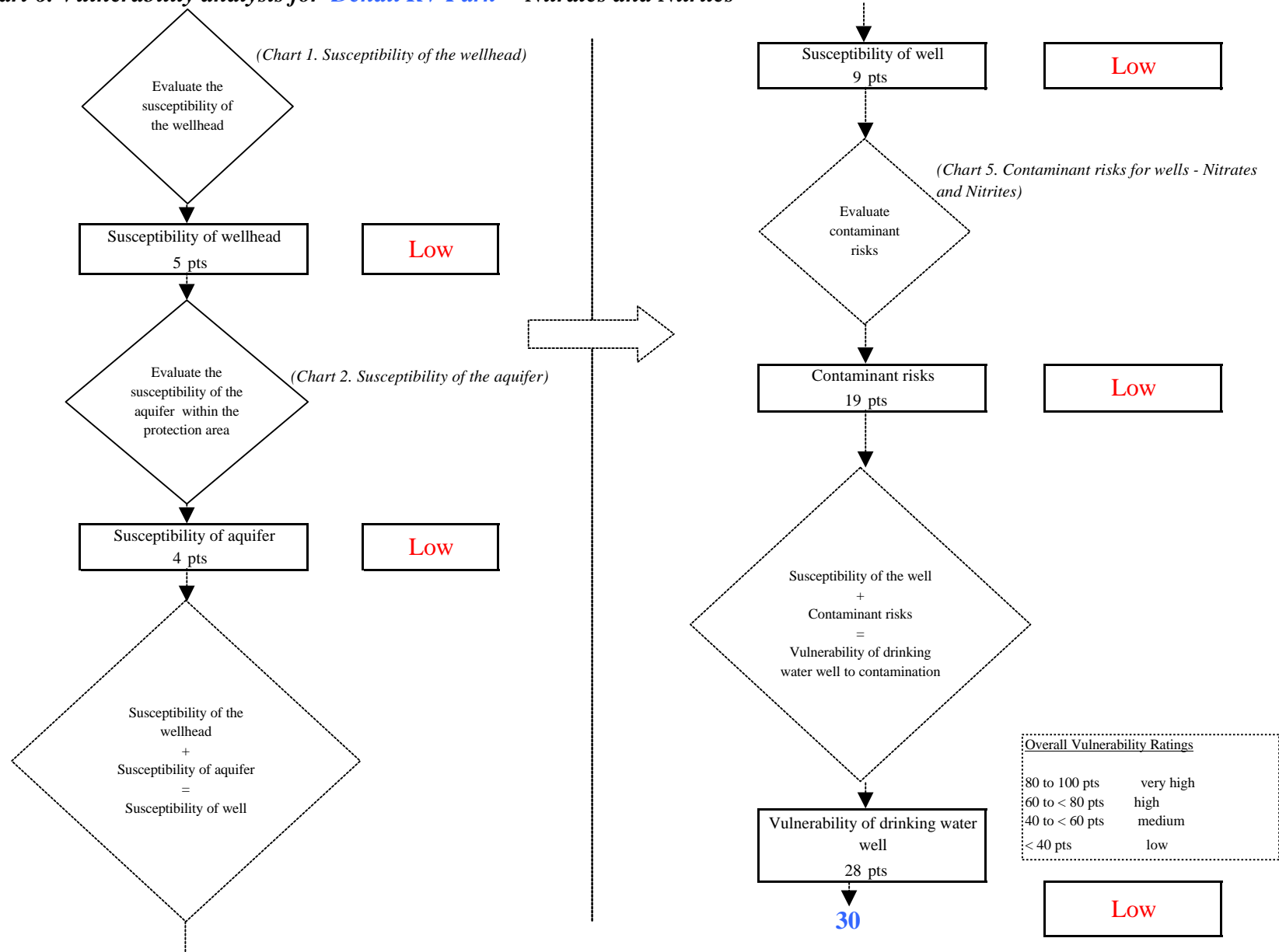


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for *Denali RV Park* - Volatile Organic Chemicals

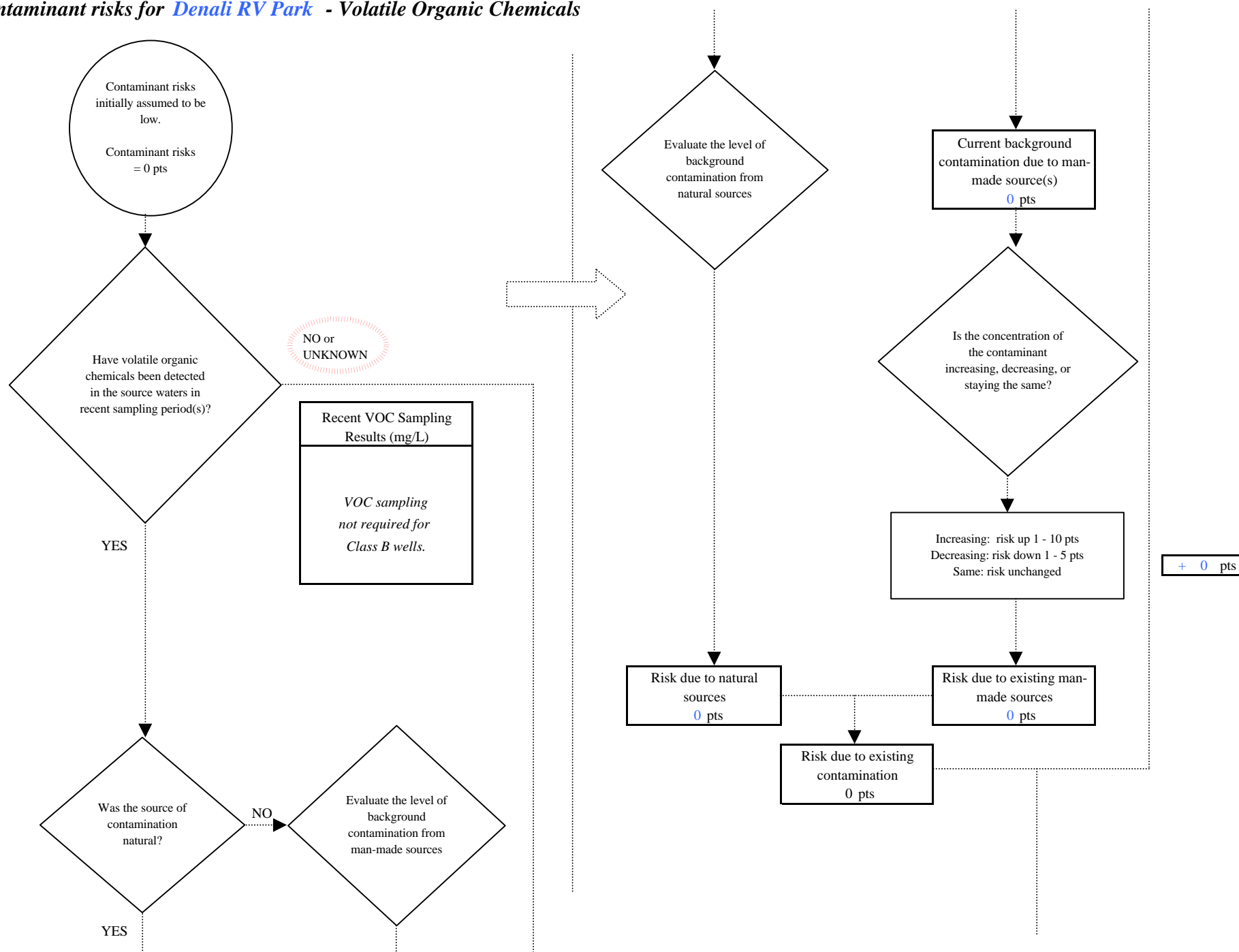


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Denali RV Park - Volatile Organic Chemicals

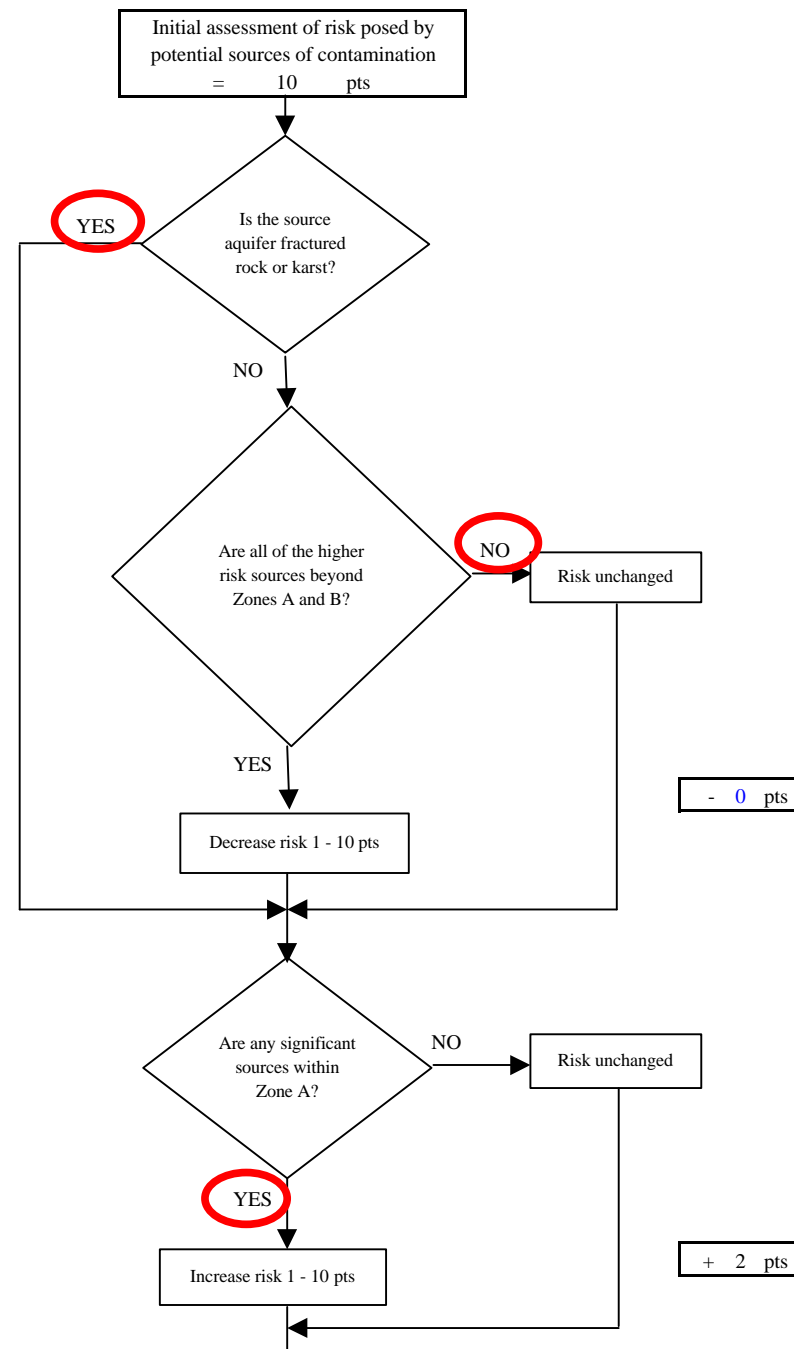
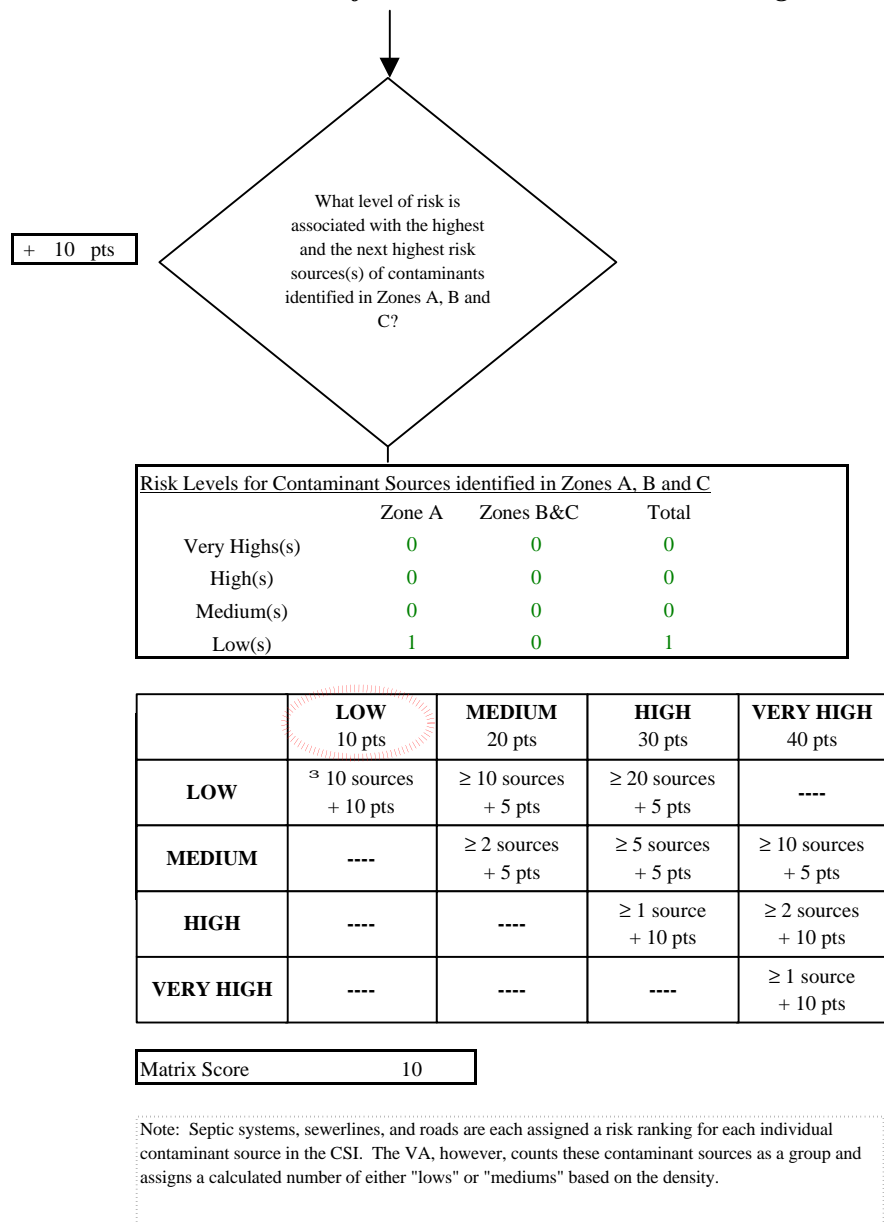


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Denali RV Park - Volatile Organic Chemicals

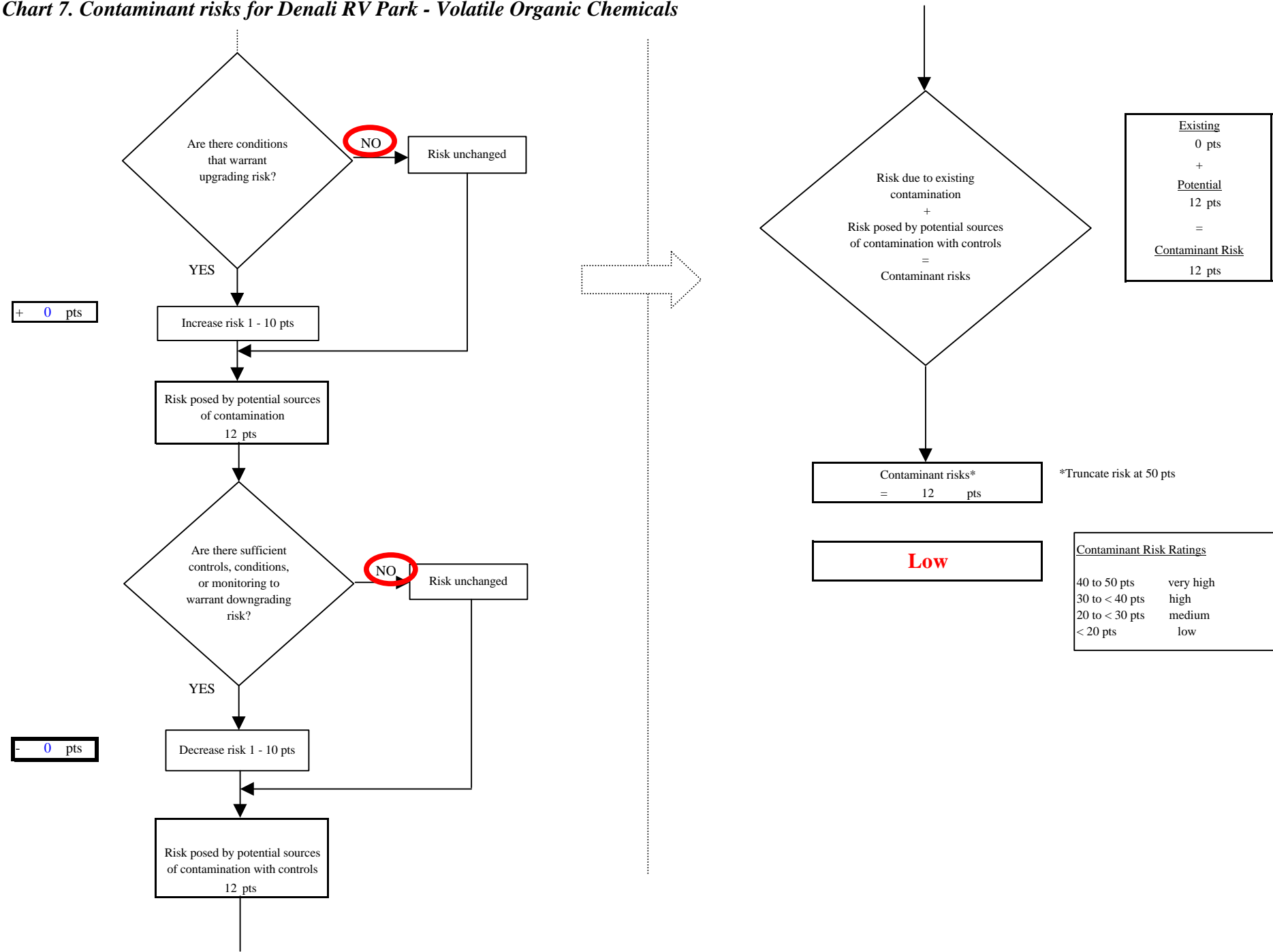


Chart 8. Vulnerability analysis for *Denali RV Park* - Volatile Organic Chemicals

