



Source Water Assessment

A Hydrogeologic Susceptibility and Vulnerability
Assessment for
Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook
Drinking Water System,
Ninilchik, Alaska
PWSID # 248129
June 2003

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT # 656
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

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By Ecology & Environment, Inc.

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT # 656

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.

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Source Water Assessment for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Source of Public Drinking Water, Ninilchik, Alaska

By Ecology & Environment, Inc.

Drinking Water Protection Program Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Executive Summary

Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system consisting of one well in Ninilchik, Alaska. The wellhead received a susceptibility rating of **Low** and the aquifer received a susceptibility rating of **Low**. Combining these two ratings produces a **Low** rating for the natural susceptibility of the well. Identified potential and current sources of contaminants for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook public drinking water source include: pit toilets and roads. 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 Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook 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 Ninilchik Area

Location

Ninilchik is located at mile 134 to 138 of the Sterling Highway, on the Kenai Peninsula, approximately 180 miles south of Anchorage and 38 miles southwest of the City of Kenai (see the inset of Map 1 in Appendix A). The population was 772 in 2000 (ADCED 2003). The economy centers on commercial and sport fishing, and tourism.

Precipitation

The Ninilchik area averages about 17.5 inches of precipitation per year (WCI 2003). The region receives approximately 53 inches of annual snowfall (ACRC 2003).

Topography and Drainage

Ninilchik is located between the base of the Caribou Hills and Cook Inlet, at the mouth of the Ninilchik River. Deep Creek enters the Inlet just to the south. The topography is relatively gentle, with some small hills. Drainage patterns are often poorly defined in the Ninilchik lowlands, and hummocky terrain and muskeg are the predominant features. Channels draining the Caribou Hills uplands are better defined (Savard & Scully, 1984).

Groundwater Use

The majority of households in the Ninilchik area either have private wells, or haul their own water. There is a community well operated by the Ninilchik Village Council. Two-thirds of residences have individual septic systems; the remainder use outhouses. A little over half of the residences are occupied on a seasonal basis (ADCED 2003).

Geology and Soils

The vast majority of sediments exposed along the western side of the Kenai Peninsula are Quaternary sediments (Magoon, Adkison, and Egbert, 1976). These sediments are from former glacial streams, abandoned-channel deposits, glacial moraines and deposits from existing streams (Glass, 1996). They generally consist of a combination of sand, gravel, silt, and clay. There can be significant variation in the composition of sediment layers over relatively small areas. As a consequence, aquifers in the area may be either confined or unconfined, depending on the local sequence of sediment layers (Glass, 1996). The Tertiary-aged Sterling Formation is exposed along the shoreline cliffs of eastern Cook Inlet, from approximately Kasilof to Happy Valley. It comprises sandstone, siltstone and some coal (Magoon, Adkison, and Egbert, 1976).

Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Public Drinking Water System

Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook is a Class B (transient/non-community) water system. The system consists of one well located near on the Sterling Highway in Ninilchik, Alaska.

The well was installed on July 24, 1994 to a total depth of 120 feet and the condition of the sanitary seal is unknown. A properly installed sanitary seal may provide protection against contaminants from entering the source waters at the well casing. The site is properly drained and the well is grouted. Proper grouting provides added protection against contaminants traveling along the well casing and into source waters. The well operates from April to September and serves an unknown amount of residents and non-residents.

Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook 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 is 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 this aquifer were derived from Freeze and Cherry (1979), Glass (1996), and from a review of well logs in the area found in the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and United States Geological Survey databases. Additional methods were 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 DWPAs 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 time-of-travel
B	Less than the 2-year time-of-travel
C	Less than the 5-year time-of-travel
D	Less than the 10 year time-of-travel

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 Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook 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 the drinking water protection area were associated with residential and light industrial type activities. The sources are displayed on Map 2 of Appendix C and summarized in the tables in Appendix B.

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. Rankings include:

- Low;
- Medium;
- High; and
- Very High.

The time-of-travel for contaminants within the water varies and is dependent on the physical and chemical characteristics of each contaminant. Bacteria and Viruses are only inventoried in Zones A and B because of their short life span. Only “Very High” and “High” rankings are inventoried within the outer Zone D due to the probability of contaminant dilution by the time the contaminants get to the well.

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

Vulnerability of Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Drinking Water Source

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

- Natural susceptibility; and
- Contaminant risks.

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

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

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

+

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

=

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

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

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

The well for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook is completed in a confined aquifer. Confined aquifers are somewhat protected from migration of water from the surface by an overlying low-permeability layer, such as a clay. However, contaminants at the surface have the potential to impact this aquifer adversely because wells penetrating the aquifer can act as conduits. The confining layers in this area can be somewhat discontinuous, which also increases the susceptibility of the aquifer. Table 2 shows the Susceptibility scores and

ratings for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook (see Charts 1 and 2).

Table 2. Susceptibility

	Score	Rating
Susceptibility of the Wellhead	0	Low
Susceptibility of the Aquifer	7	Low
Natural Susceptibility	7	Low

Contaminant risks to a drinking water source depend on the type, number or density, and distribution of contaminant sources. This score has been derived from an examination of existing or historical contamination that has been detected at the drinking water source through routine sampling. It also evaluates potential sources of contamination. Flow charts are used to assign a point score, and ratings are assigned in the same way as for the natural susceptibility.

Contaminant Risk Ratings	
40 to 50 pts	Very High
30 to < 40 pts	High
20 to < 30 pts	Medium
< 20 pts	Low

Table 3 summarizes the Contaminant Risks for each category of drinking water contaminants (see Charts 3, 5, and 7).

Table 3. Contaminant Risks

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

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

Again, rankings are assigned according to a point score:

Overall Vulnerability Ratings

80 to 100 pts	Very High
60 to < 80 pts	High
40 to < 60 pts	Medium
< 40 pts	Low

Table 4 contains the overall vulnerability scores (0 – 100) and ratings for each of the three categories of drinking water contaminants. Note: scores are rounded off to the nearest five (see Charts 4, 6, and 8).

Table 4. Overall Vulnerability to Contamination by Category

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

Bacteria and Viruses

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

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

Nitrates and Nitrites

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

The last five years' sampling history for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook public water source indicates the most recent concentration detected was 0.100 mg/L on 8/16/00, which represents 1% of the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). While nitrates and nitrites can occur naturally in groundwater, a level of 20% of the MCL or more is considered to be due to manmade sources. Water with levels of nitrates and nitrites below 100% of the MCL is considered safe to drink by ADEC. After combining the contaminant risk for nitrates and nitrites with the natural susceptibility of the

well, the overall vulnerability of the well to contamination by nitrates and nitrites is Low.

Volatile Organic Chemicals

The contaminant risk for volatile organic chemicals is Low with the roads representing the highest risk for volatile organic chemicals (See Chart 7 – Contaminant Risks for Volatile Organic Chemicals in Appendix D).

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

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

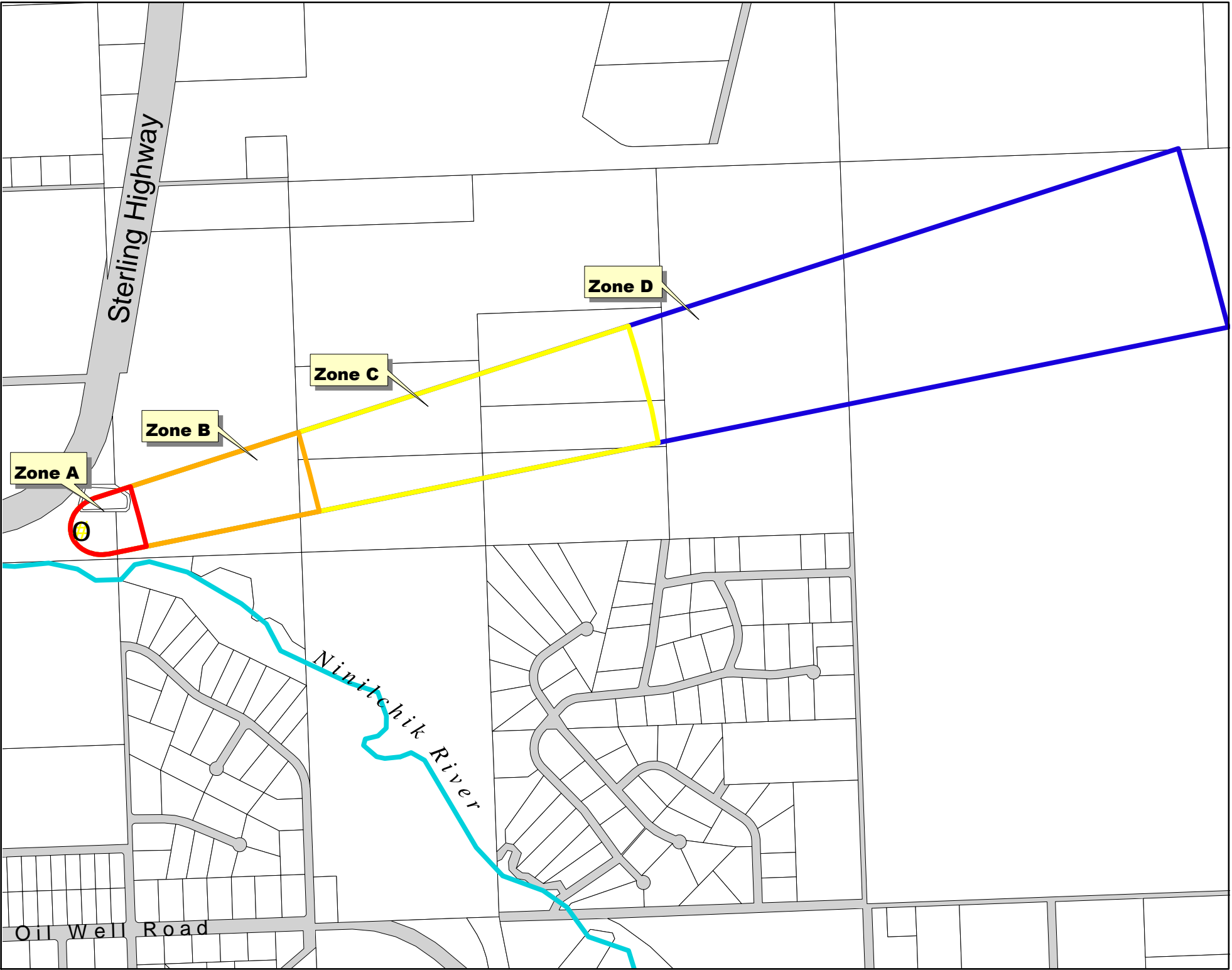
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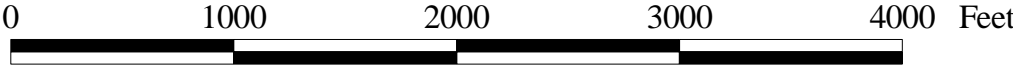
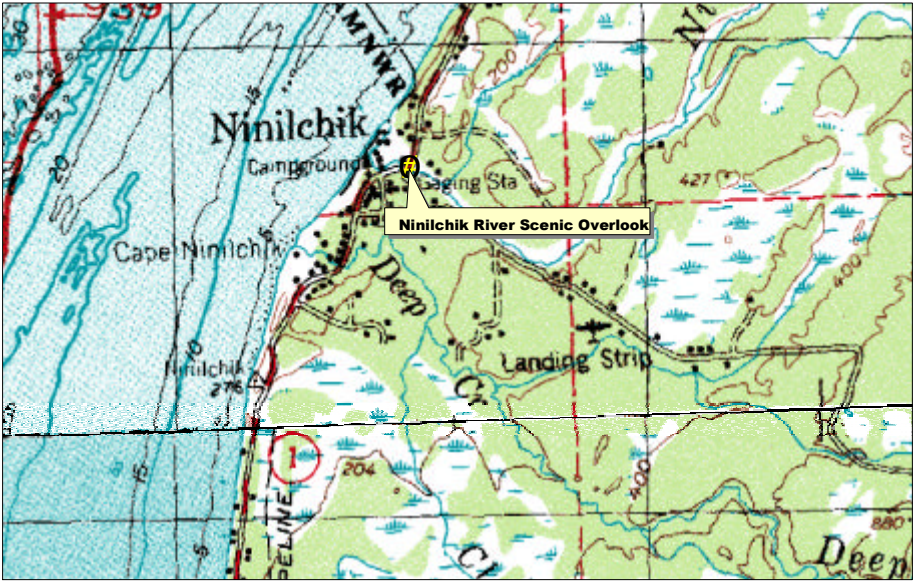
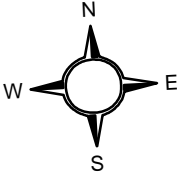
APPENDIX A

Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Drinking Water Protection Area (Map 1)

Drinking Water Protection Area for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook



- Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Well
- Zone A (Few Months Travel Time)
- Zone B (Less Than 2 Years Travel Time)
- Zone C (Less Than 5 Years Travel Time)
- Zone D (Less Than 10 Years Travel Time)



APPENDIX B

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook (Tables 1-4)

Table 1

*Contaminant Source Inventory for
Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook*

PWSID 248129.001

<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>
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-1	A	Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook	2	

Table 2

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook
Sources of Bacteria and Viruses*

PWSID 248129.001

<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-1	A	Low	Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook	2	

Table 3

*Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook
Sources of Nitrates/Nitrites*

PWSID 248129.001

<i>Contaminant Source Type</i>	<i>Contaminant Source ID</i>	<i>CS ID tag</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Risk Ranking for Analysis</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Map Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Pit toilets (vaulted) nonresidential (one or more)	D17	D17-1	A	Low	Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook	2	
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook	2	

Table 4

Contaminant Source Inventory and Risk Ranking for
Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook
Sources of Volatile Organic Chemicals

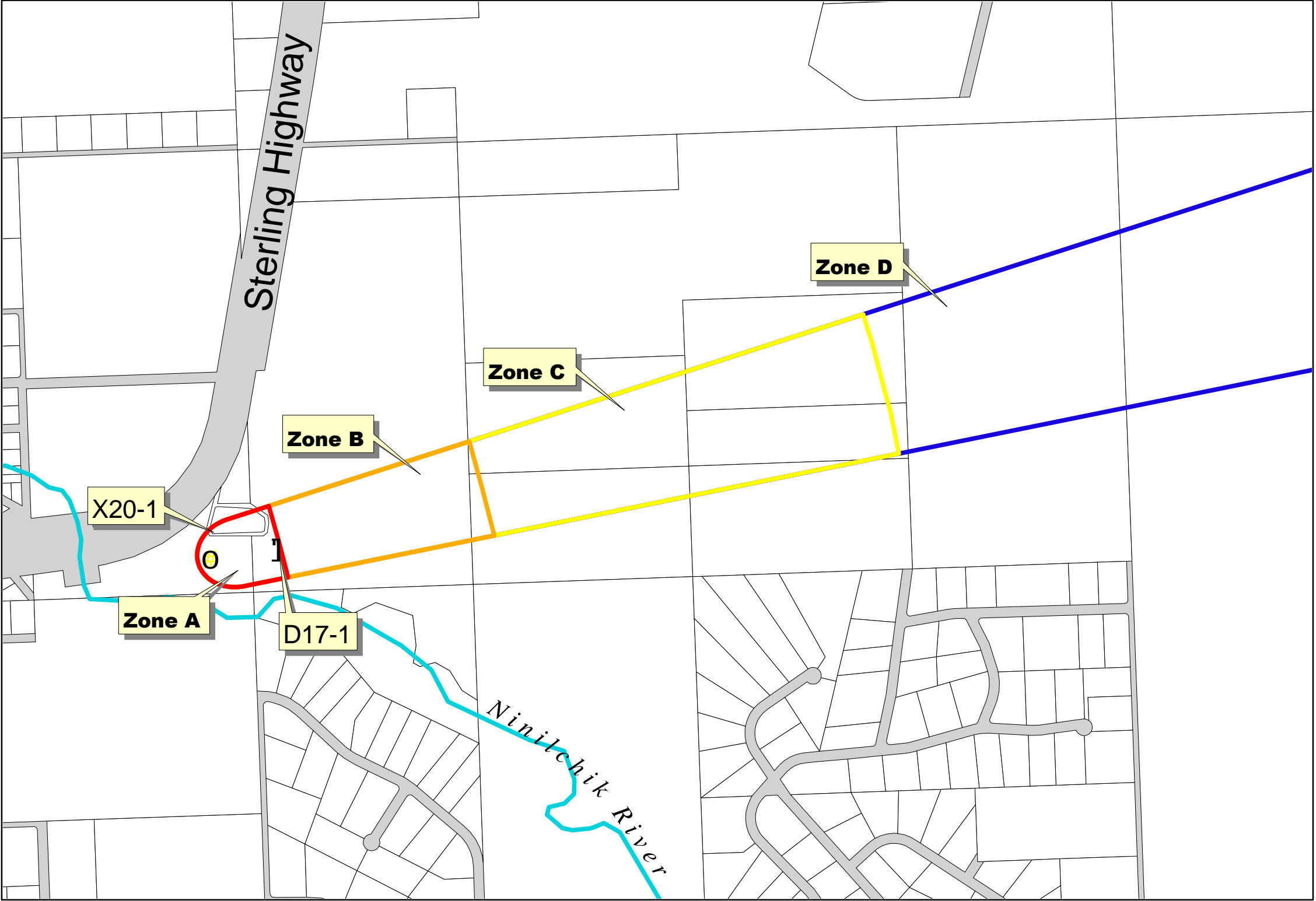
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Contaminant Source Type	Contaminant Source ID	CS ID tag	Zone	Risk Ranking for Analysis	Location	Map Number	Comments
Highways and roads, paved (cement or asphalt)	X20	X20-1	A	Low	Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook	2	

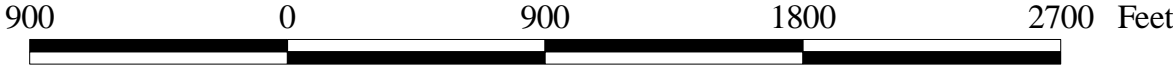
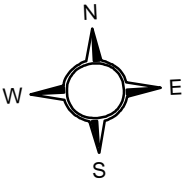
APPENDIX C

Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Drinking Water Protection Area and Potential and Existing Contaminant Sources (Map 2)

Drinking Water Protection Area For Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook and Potential and Existing Sources of Contamination



- Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Well
- Pit Toilet-D17
- Zone A (Few Months Travel Time)
- Zone B (Less Than 2 Years Travel Time)
- Zone C (Less Than 5 Years Travel Time)
- Zone D (Less Than 10 Years Travel Time)



PWSID 248129.001

Map 2

APPENDIX D

Vulnerability Analysis for Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook Public Drinking Water Source (Charts 1-8)

Chart 1. Susceptibility of the wellhead - *Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook*

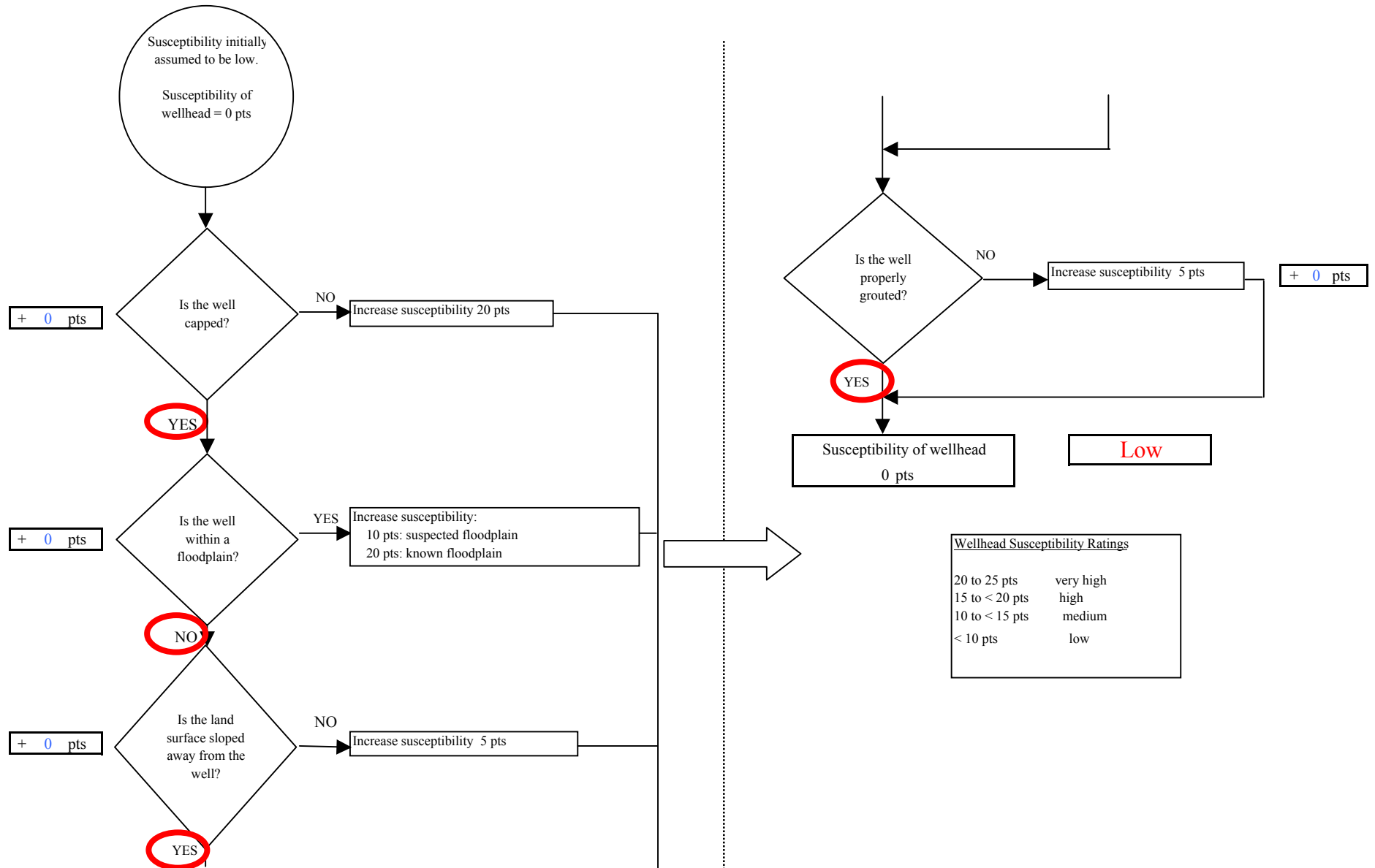


Chart 2. Susceptibility of the aquifer - Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook

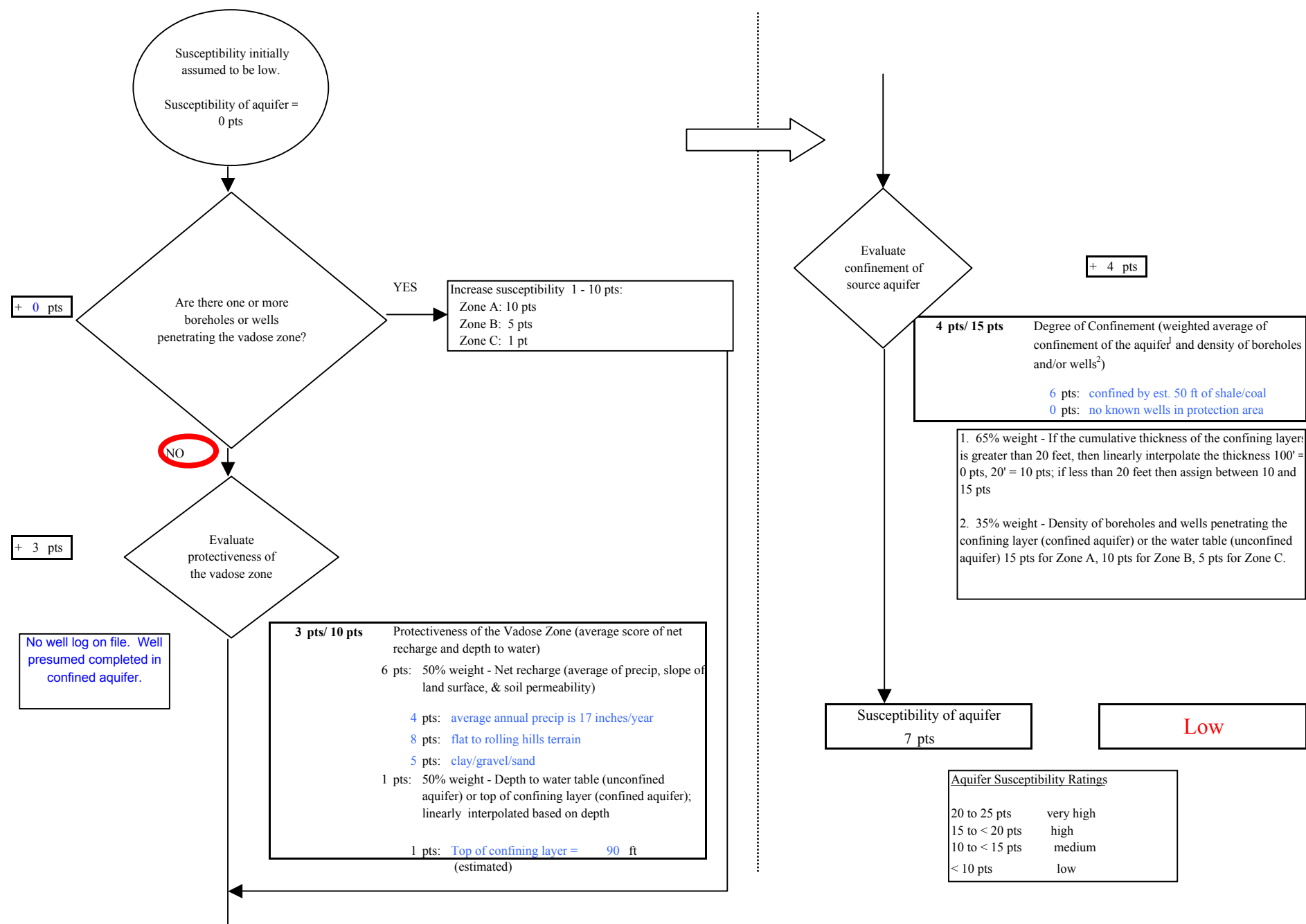


Chart 3. Contaminant risks for *Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Bacteria & Viruses*

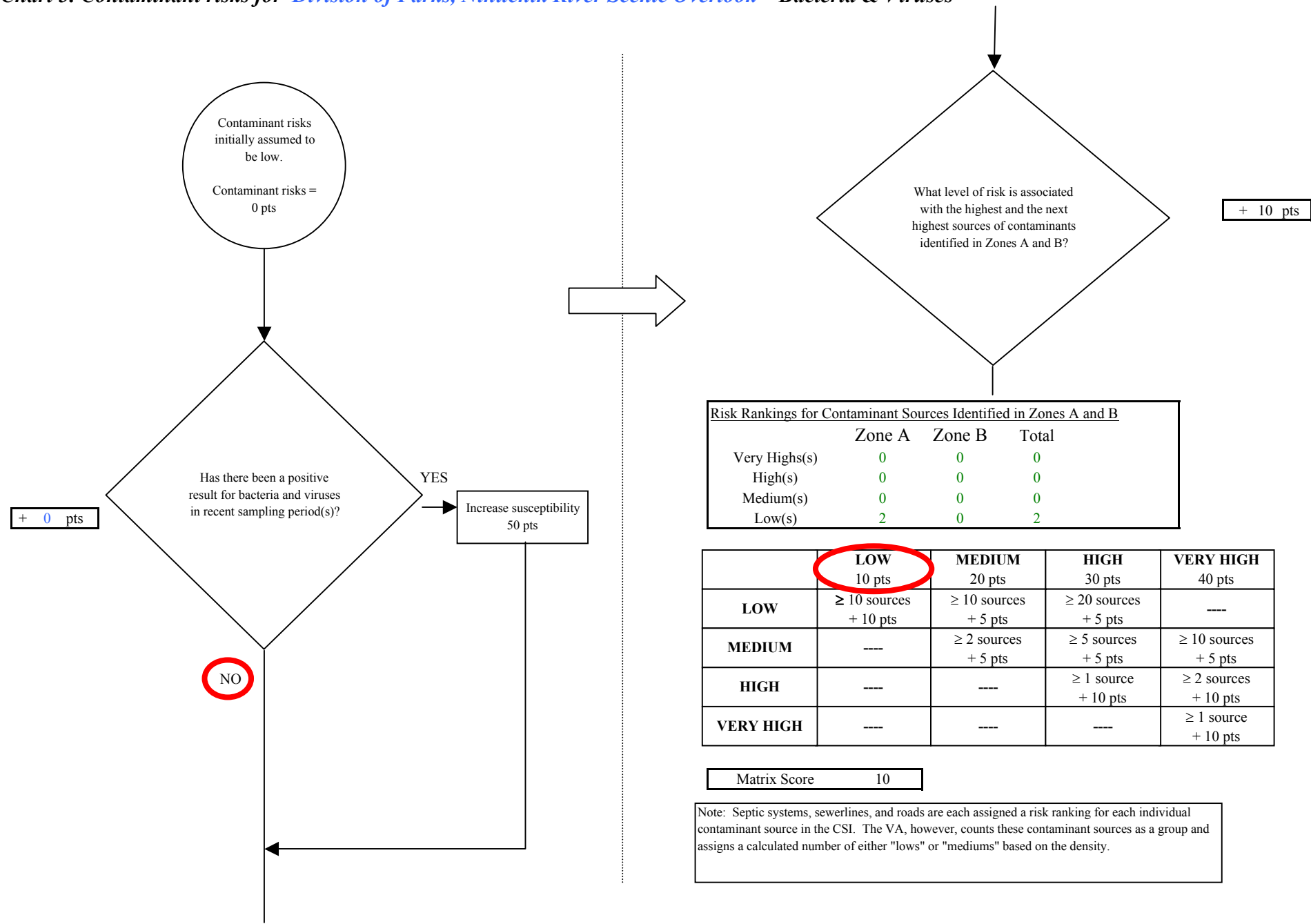


Chart 3. Contaminant risks for Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Bacteria & Viruses

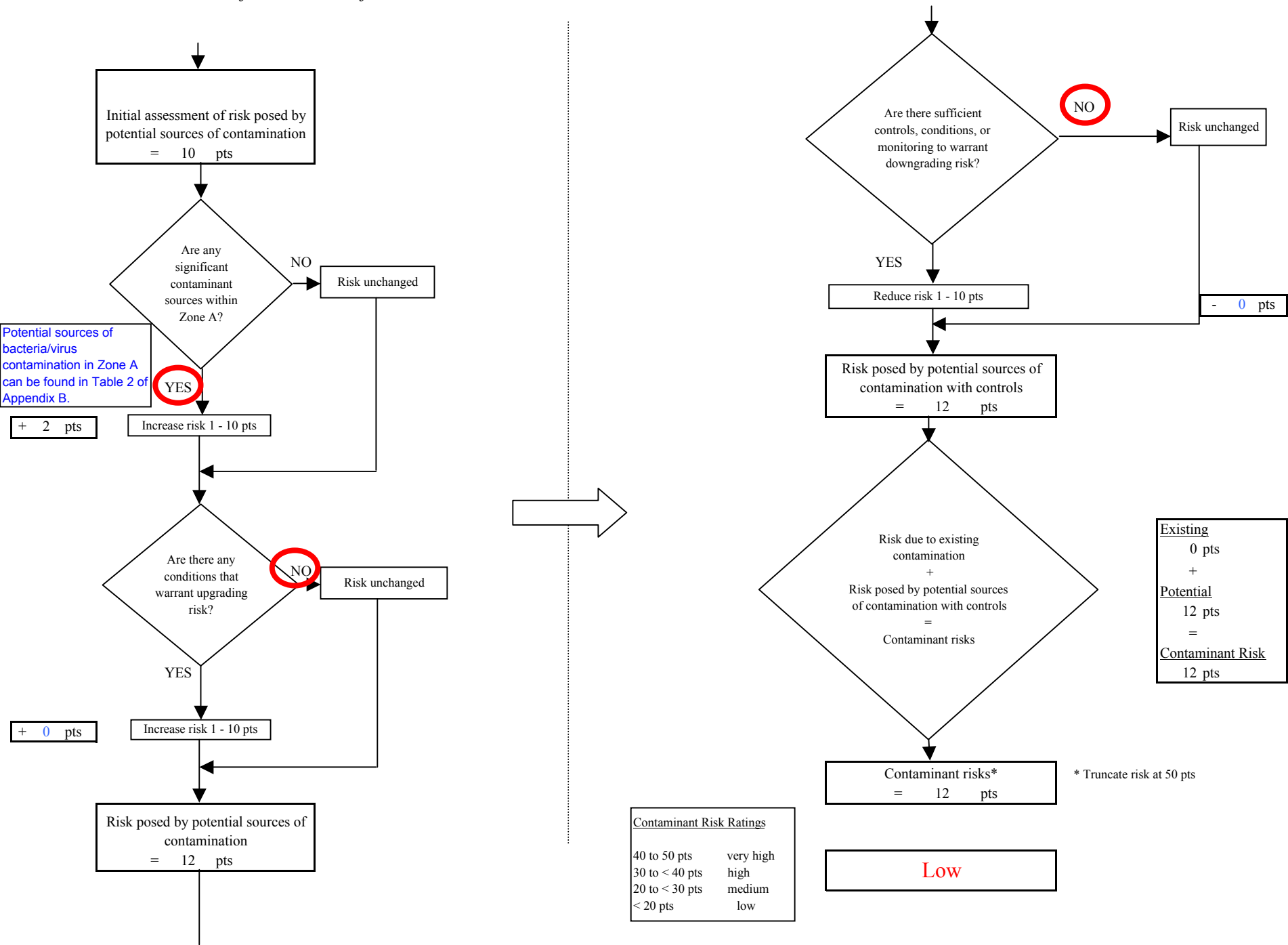


Chart 4. Vulnerability analysis for *Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook* - Bacteria & Viruses

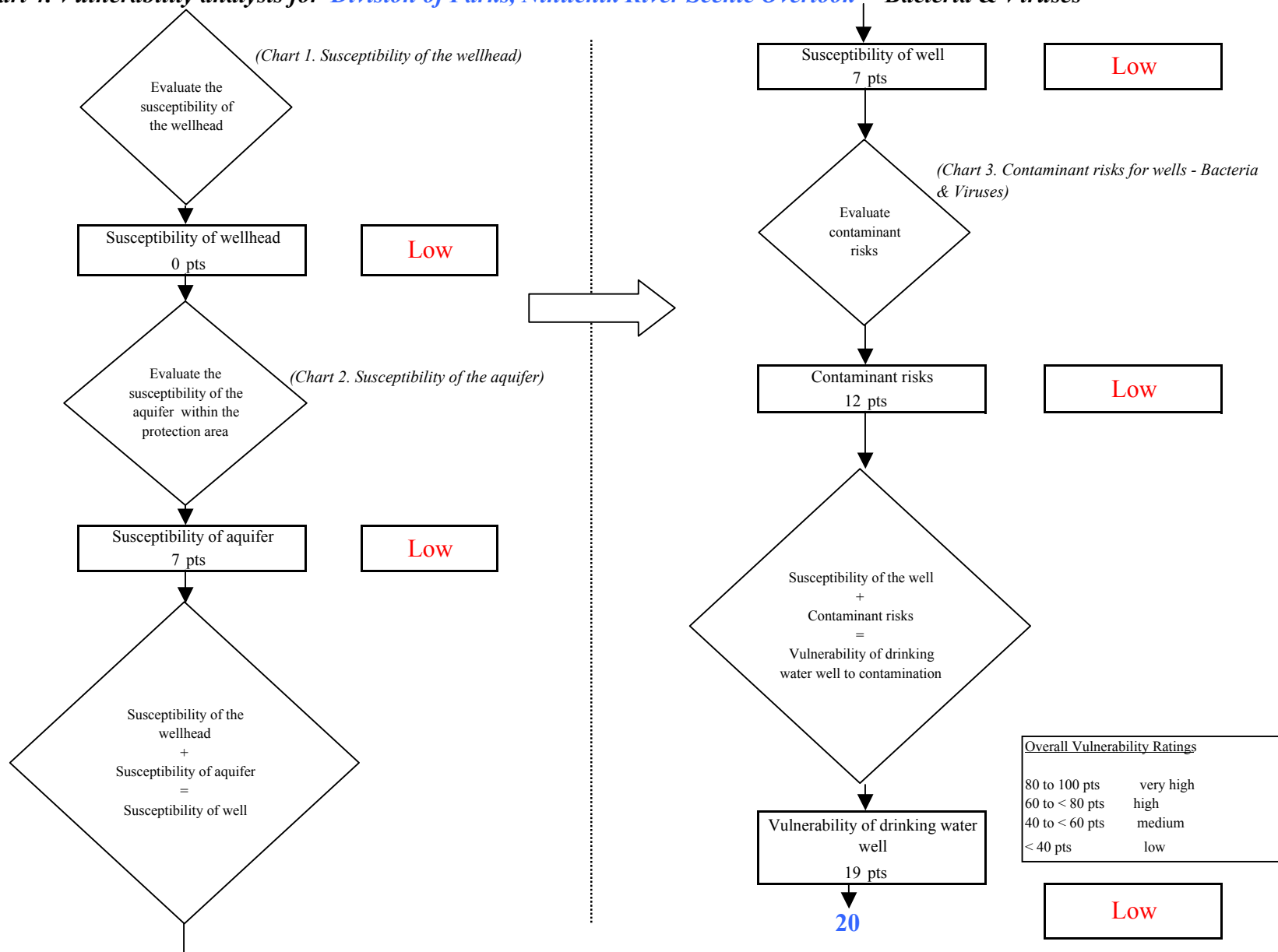


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for *Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Nitrates and Nitrites*

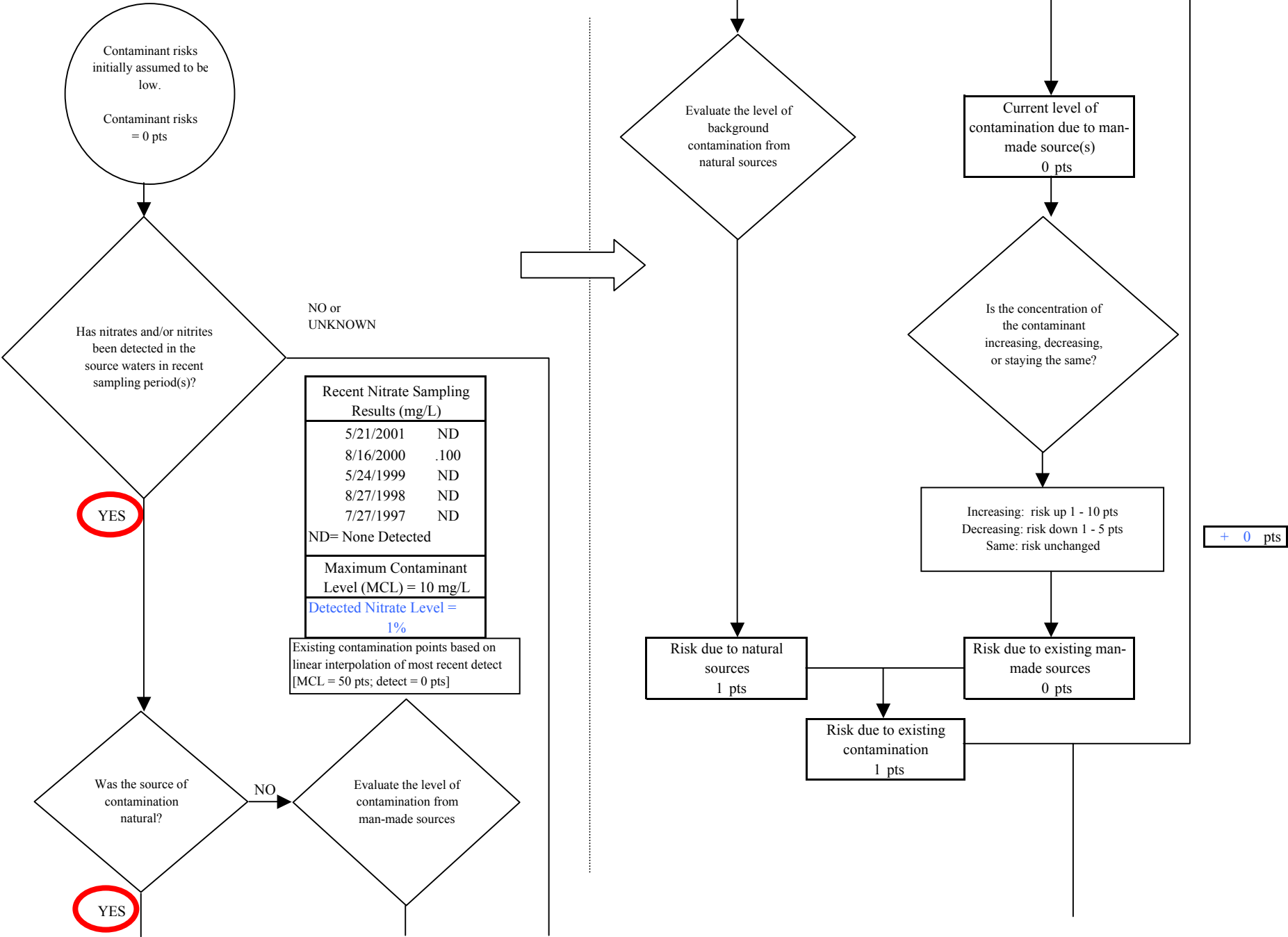


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Nitrates and Nitrites

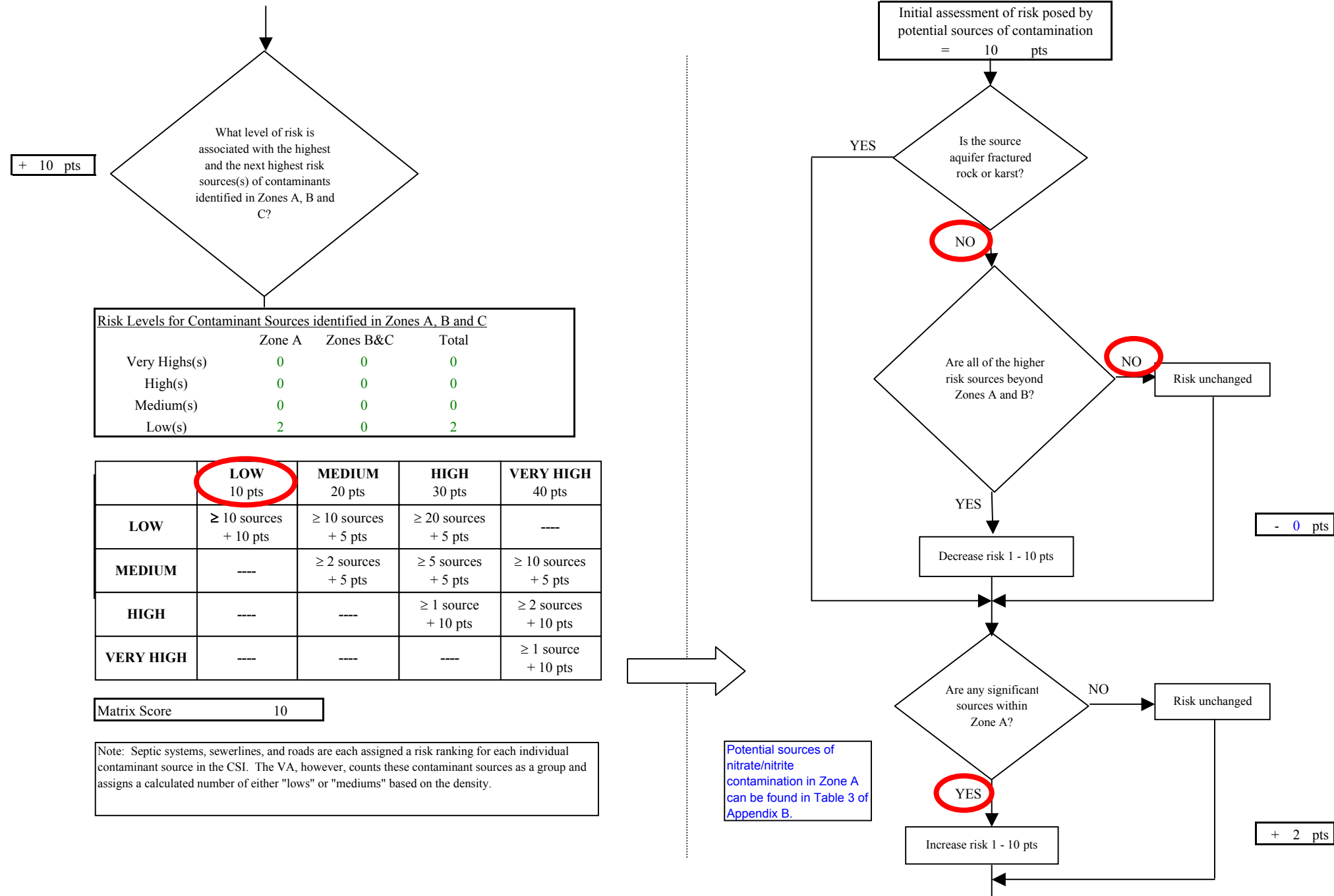


Chart 5. Contaminant risks for Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Nitrates and Nitrites

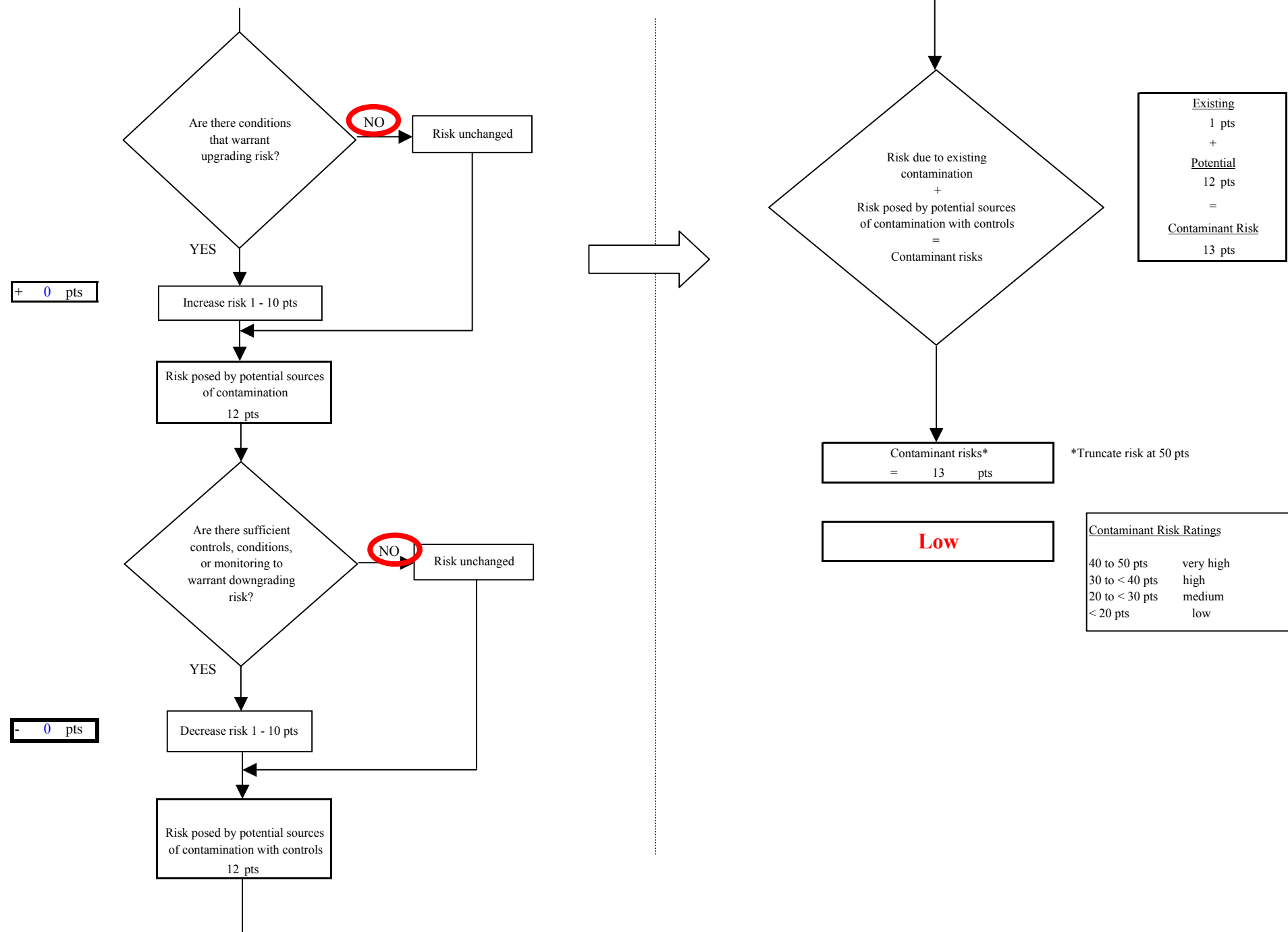


Chart 6. Vulnerability analysis for *Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook* - Nitrates and Nitrites

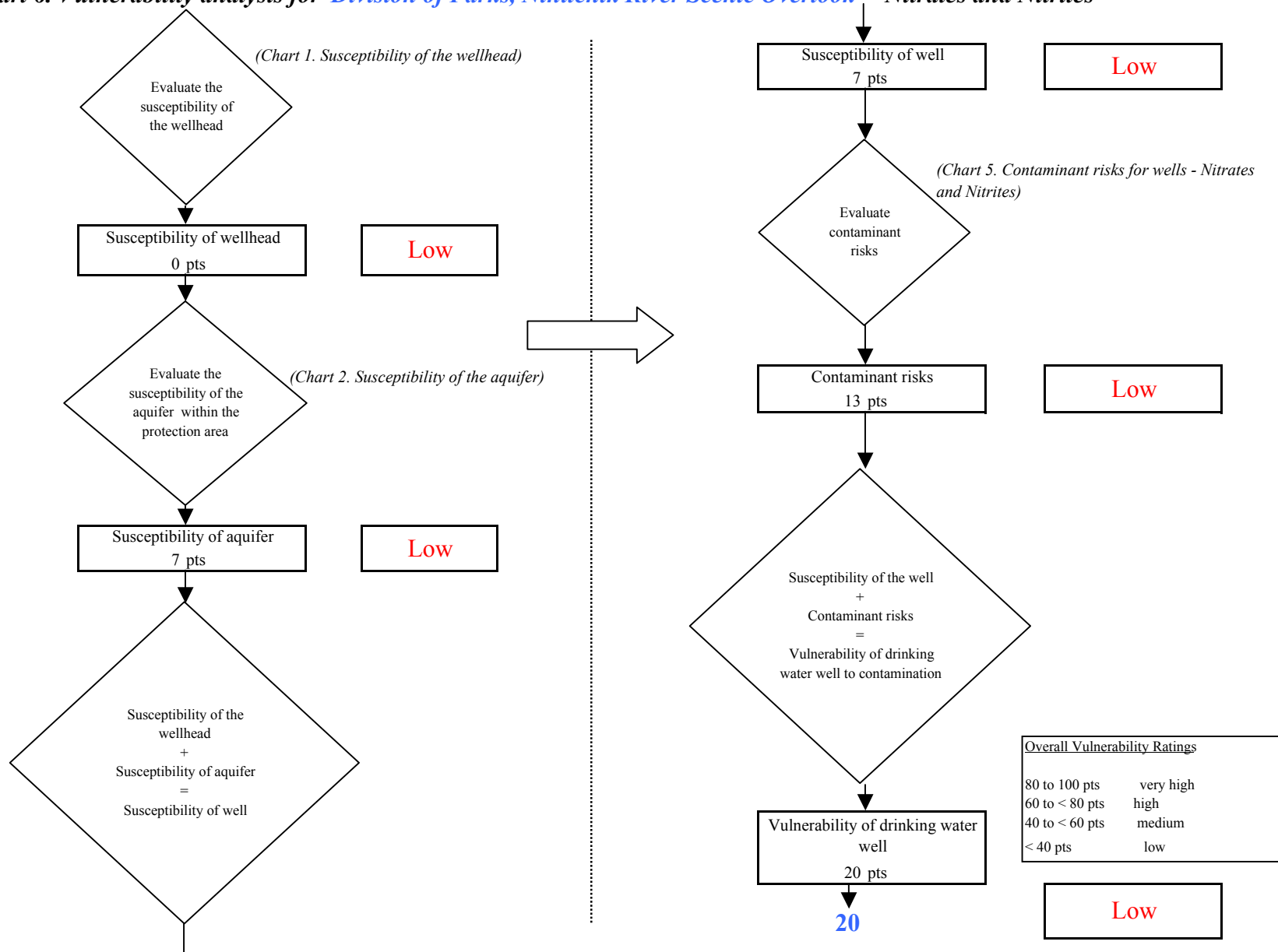


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for *Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Volatile Organic Chemicals*

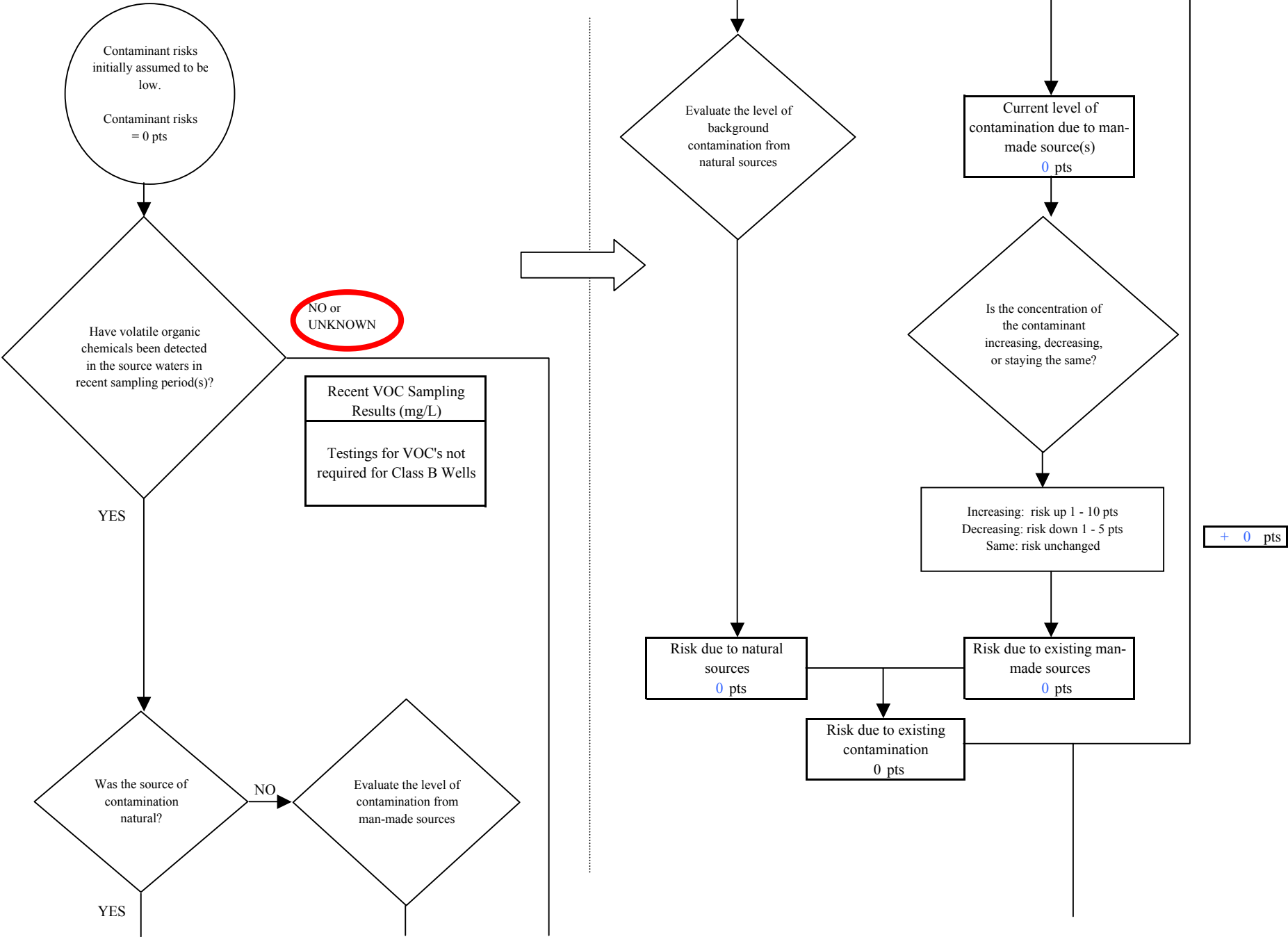


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Volatile Organic Chemicals

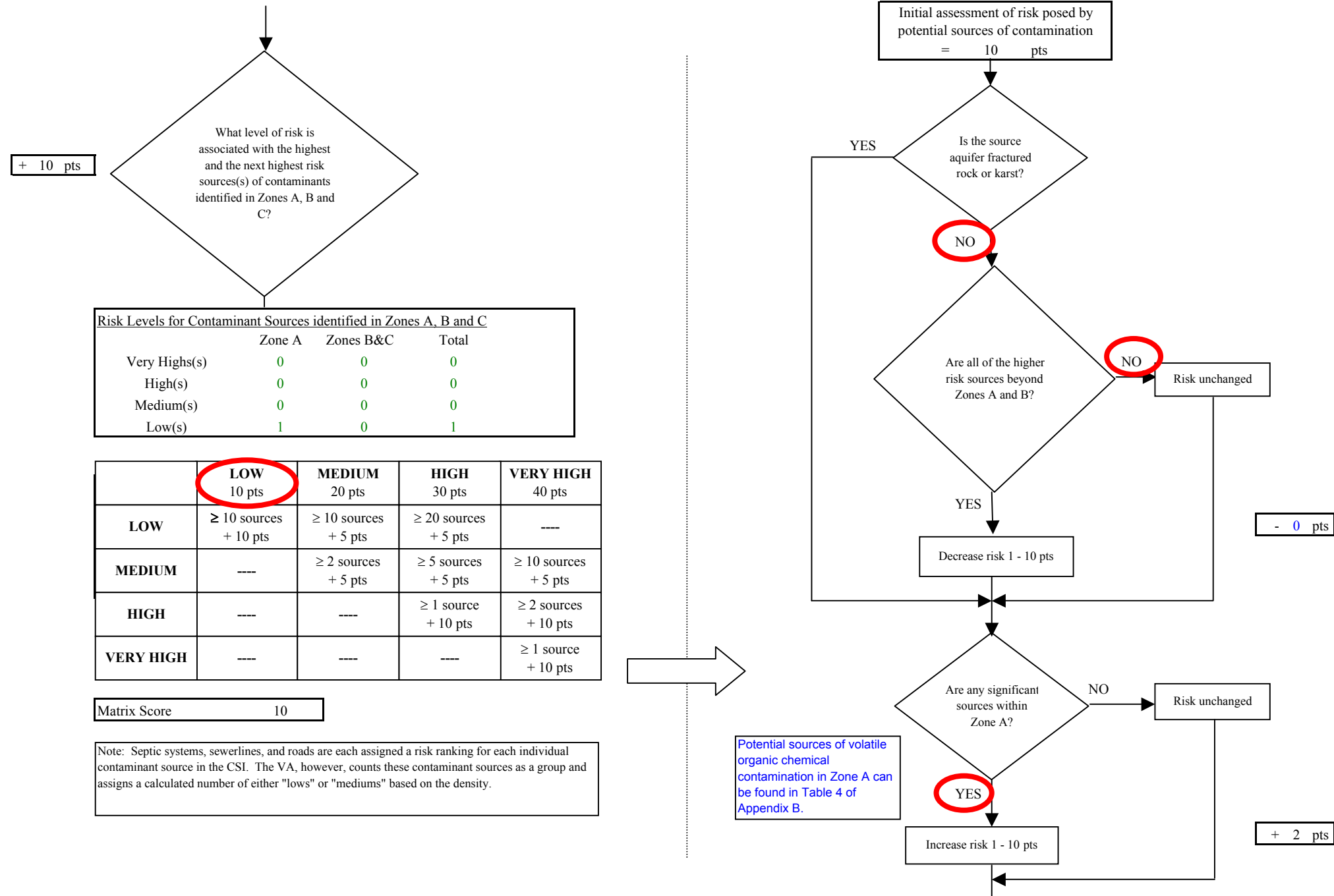


Chart 7. Contaminant risks for Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Volatile Organic Chemicals

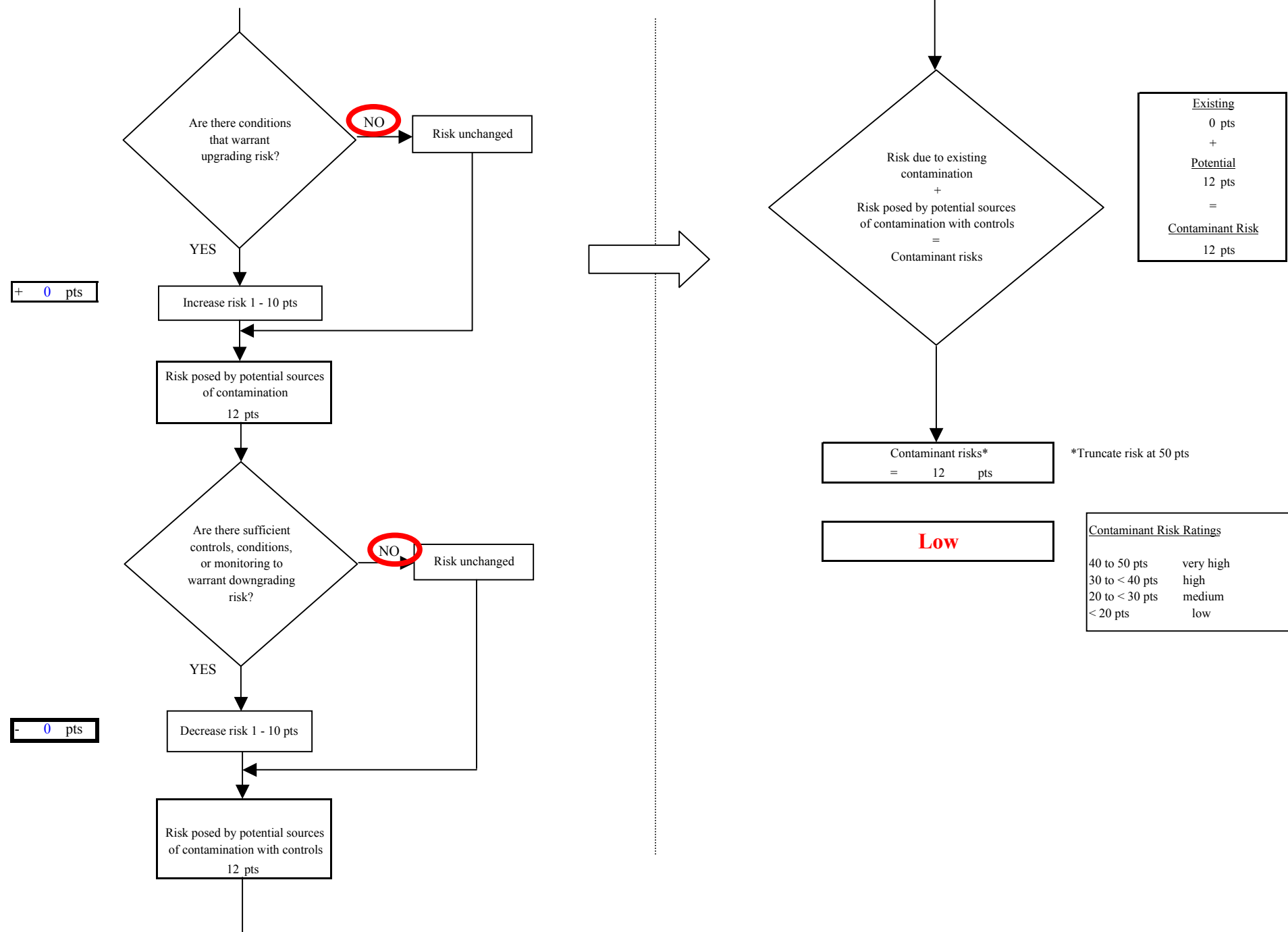


Chart 8. Vulnerability analysis for Division of Parks, Ninilchik River Scenic Overlook - Volatile Organic Chemicals

