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# FLOOD CHARACTERISTICS OF ALASKAN STREAMS

25133

$$Q_T = \frac{Q_{50}}{Q_5} \times P_5$$

$$Q_{50} = 0.65 M^{1.024} D^{2.325}$$

 $Q_5$ 

$$Q_2 = 1.16 \frac{M^{0.988}}{D^{0.05}} = 1.16 \frac{(2,450)^{0.988}}{(1.38)^{0.05}} = 2,550 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}$$

Prepared by the United States  
Department of the Interior  
Geological Survey  
in cooperation with  
State of Alaska  
Department of Transportation  
and  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

$$Q_T = C M^a D^k$$

 $Q_2$ 

WATER RESOURCES INVESTIGATIONS 78-129



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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no. 78-129

FLOOD CHARACTERISTICS OF ALASKAN STREAMS

by

R. D. Lamke

Techniques for calculating magnitude and frequency  
of floods in Alaska, with compilations of flood  
data through October 1, 1975.

Prepared in cooperation with  
STATE OF ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
and  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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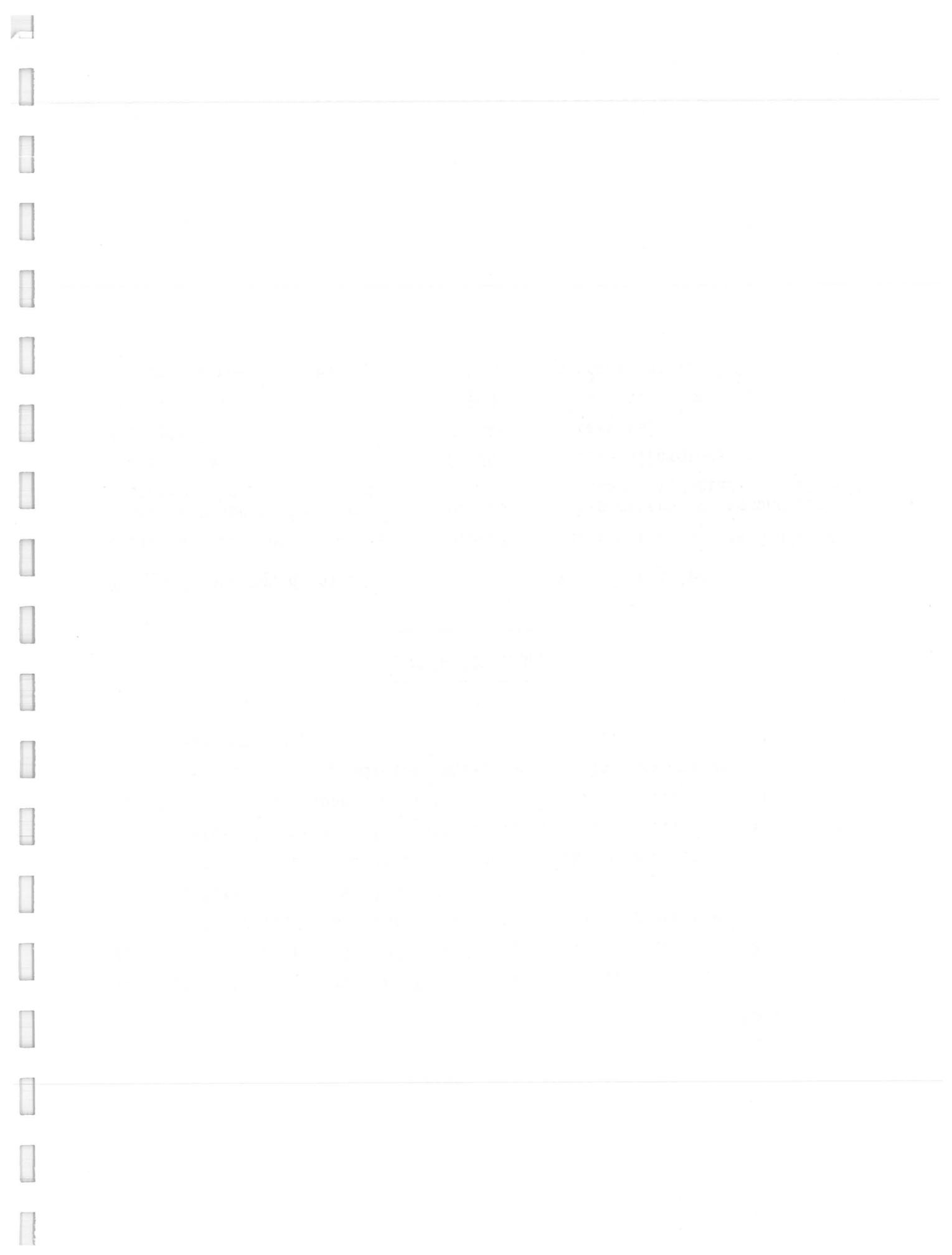
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## CONVERSION TABLE

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<u>Multiply inch-pound units</u>	<u>by</u>	<u>to obtain SI units</u>
cubic feet per second ( $\text{ft}^3/\text{s}$ )	0.0283	cubic meters per second ( $\text{m}^3/\text{s}$ )
cubic feet per second per square mile [ $(\text{ft}^3/\text{s})/\text{mi}^2$ ]	0.0109	cubic meters per second per square kilometer [ $(\text{m}^3/\text{s})/\text{km}^2$ ]
square miles ( $\text{mi}^2$ )	2.589	square kilometers ( $\text{km}^2$ )
feet (ft)	0.3048	meters (m)
inches (in.)	2.540	centimeters (cm)
degrees Fahrenheit ( $^{\circ}\text{F}$ )	$5/9$ ( $^{\circ}\text{F}-32$ )	degrees Celsius ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ )



## FLOOD CHARACTERISTICS OF ALASKAN STREAMS

R. D. Lamke

### ABSTRACT

Peak discharge data for Alaskan streams are summarized and analyzed. Alaska is divided into two regions, one having a maritime climate with fall and winter rains and floods (Area I), the other having spring and summer floods of a variety or combinations of causes (Area II).

Multiple-regression equations relate the magnitude of a discharge that has a given frequency to the climatic and physical characteristics of a stream's drainage basin. The physical characteristics include drainage area, amount of storage in the lakes and ponds, and the amount of forested land (significant only in Area II). The climatic characteristics found to be significant are annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperature. Maps show the lines of equal intensity of these climatic variables and locations of the 260 sites used in the multiple-regression analyses.

The equations resulting from the analyses for 260 gaged basins can be used to estimate floods of specified exceedance probability (or average recurrence interval) at ungaged sites. These equations are for the 1.25-, 2-, 5-, 10-, 25-, and 50-year average recurrence intervals (80 to 2 percent exceedance probability). Average standard errors of the multiple-regression equations for Areas I and II are 48 and 74 percent, respectively. Statistical methods are also presented to estimate flood discharges with low exceedance probability at sites with only a short record of flood discharges or at ungaged sites whose basin characteristics are similar to those at a nearby gaged site where there is a long record of yearly flood peaks.

Little information on floods in western and arctic Alaska has been collected, and the predictive equations for those areas are therefore less reliable than for areas for which there are more data.

Maximum recorded floods at more than 400 sites throughout Alaska are tabulated.

#### INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of flood characteristics is necessary to evaluate flood hazards and to design economical structures along streams. One way of evaluating flood characteristics at a gaging station or a crest-stage gage is to relate the magnitudes of instantaneous peak discharges to their frequencies of occurrence. However, flood records have been collected in Alaska at few such gaged sites.

This report presents methods for calculating the magnitude and frequency of flood discharges at ungaged sites. The methods described utilize flood magnitude and frequency data collected at gaged sites and relate the data to physical and climatic characteristics of these gaged basins. (See tables 1 and 2 at the back of this report for the basin characteristics of sites used in developing equations, the bottom of table 2 for definitions of basin characteristics, and tables 3 and 4 for the flood data used.)

No attempt is made in this study to predict peak discharges from glacier-dammed lakes. A report entitled "Glacier Dammed Lakes and Outburst Floods in Alaska" by Post and Mayo (1971) shows the location of those lakes and describes their recent history, as well as delineating areas where outburst flooding may be expected.

Maximum known peak discharges for all Alaskan gaging stations and numerous miscellaneous measurement sites are listed in table 5. The maximum discharge in cubic feet per second per square mile provides an estimate of the largest floods that might be expected at ungaged sites in a region.

Floods can result from causes other than high rates of runoff from rain or snowmelt. Floods may occur when the water surface along a stream rises above some predetermined level because of backwater from a downstream obstruction such as an ice jam. Peak discharges can occur from the sudden release of water impounded by temporary dams of earth or snow slides. Another common type of flood that occurs in Alaska results from the formation of excessive ice in the channel. This ice formation (aufeis or icing) frequently spreads beyond the channel banks; any runoff from snowmelt or rain then travels over the ice surface or beside the ice formation. The probability of these flood events, their importance in designing a structure, or the possibility of a developed area being inundated are not susceptible to a regional analysis but must be estimated for each site by field investigations or from a history of past occurrences.

This report is based on flood data collected by the Geological Survey in cooperation with several federal, state, and local agencies. Of special importance is a continuing program of flood data collection on small streams throughout Alaska under a cooperative agreement with the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (formerly Department of Highways).

#### BASIN CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of gaged basins comprise selected physical and topographic parameters, as well as climatic variables of the drainages of the individual gaged sites. The basin characteristics of the stations used in this analysis are listed in tables 1 and 2. Descriptions and definitions of the characteristics are shown at the bottom of table 2.

#### FLOOD DATA

The annual maximum instantaneous peak discharge records collected at 260 gaging stations in Alaska were analyzed to determine their flood magnitude and frequency relations. The method used in the analysis was

the Log-Pearson Type III distribution as recommended by the U.S. Water Resources Council (WRC) in Bulletin 17A (1977). The criteria in Bulletin 17A, that 10 or more years of flood record be used in the analysis, were relaxed because a number of records with less than 10 years were available for otherwise ungaged areas of the state. The results are presented in tables 3 and 4.

The following criteria were used to select flood-frequency data for use in the analysis:

- (1) All stations with 5 or more years of flood record prior to October 1, 1975, were used if peak discharges were not significantly affected by outburst floods from glacier-dammed lakes.
  - (a) The flood records were not used for the following stations:

15008000	Salmon River near Hyder
15202000	Tazlina River near Glenallen
15243500	Snow River near Divide
  - (b) Only the parts of the flood record that were not outburst floods from Lake George were used for 15281000, Knik River near Palmer.
- (2) Only the 1.25-, 2-, and 5-year peaks were used for stations having less than 8 years of record.
- (3) Only the 1.25- through the 10-year peaks were used for stations having 8 to 12 years of record.
- (4) Only the 1.25- through the 25-year peaks were used for stations having 13 to 17 years of record.
- (5) Only the 1.25- through the 50-year peaks were used for stations having 18 to 22 years of record.
- (6) The 1.25- through the 100-year peaks were used for stations having more than 22 years of record.
- (7) The means and standard deviations of log-Pearson Type III analyses are shown in tables 3 and 4 for all stations with more than 10 years of record.

(8) The station skew coefficient is also shown for all stations with more than 20 years of record.

Some of the flood records were adjusted as outlined below:

(1) Some peak discharges were augmented by the failure of natural dams or diversion from an adjacent stream during the floods of August 1971.

Appropriate adjustments were made for the following stations:

15284000 Matanuska River at Palmer

15292900 Goose Creek near Montana

15294500 Chakachatna River near Tyonek

(2) Some records were adjusted for historical peaks according to the methods recommended in WRC Bulletin 17A (1977). These records were:

15283500 Eska Creek near Sutton

15484000 Salcha River near Salchaket

15493000 Chena River near Two Rivers

15511000 Little Chena River near Fairbanks

15514000 Chena River at Fairbanks

15515500 Tanana River at Nenana

(3) All records were analyzed by log-Pearson Type III analysis using WRC guidelines for low outliers and zero flow years.

(4) A few of the streamgaging stations have one or more years in which the instantaneous peak could not be determined. However, a maximum daily discharge was published. Figures for maximum daily discharge were not used in the log-Pearson Type III analysis except in a few selected instances.

In tables 3 and 4 the headings  $P_{1.25}$  and  $P_{50}$ , for example, mean that the discharge values shown have recurrence intervals of 1.25 years and 50 years, respectively. The recurrence interval is the average interval in years within which the stated discharge will be exceeded once. The exceedance probability is the probability of the given discharge being exceeded in any given year and is the reciprocal of the recurrence

interval. A comparison of the recurrence interval and exceedance probability in percent is presented below:

<u>Recurrence interval, in years</u>	<u>Exceedance probability, in percent</u>
1.25	80
2	50
5	20
10	10
25	4
50	2
100	1

#### METHOD OF ANALYSIS

##### Statewide

A preliminary multiple-regression analysis for all of Alaska was made of flood magnitude and frequency using basin characteristics of gaged sites (tables 1 and 2) and the seven flood-peak values,  $P_{1.25}$  through  $P_{100}$ , at each site (tables 3 and 4). This computer analysis resulted in several versions of seven equations,  $Q_{1.25}$  through  $Q_{100}$ , using various combinations of basin characteristics. Further analysis showed that drainage area (A), mean annual precipitation (p), and area of lake storage ( $S_t + 1$ ) were the most significant variables. Another multiple-regression analysis was computed using only these three basin characteristics for each of the seven flood values. The ratios of calculated values to values based on actual flood peaks at the gaged sites were plotted on a map of Alaska. This plot showed that the results of the flood-frequency analysis for stations in a maritime climatic environment were different than those for the rest of Alaska. The state was therefore divided into two areas, Area I and Area II, for further analysis as shown in figure 1. Another difference between Areas I and II is that the annual maximum discharge occurs at a different time of the year (fig. 2).

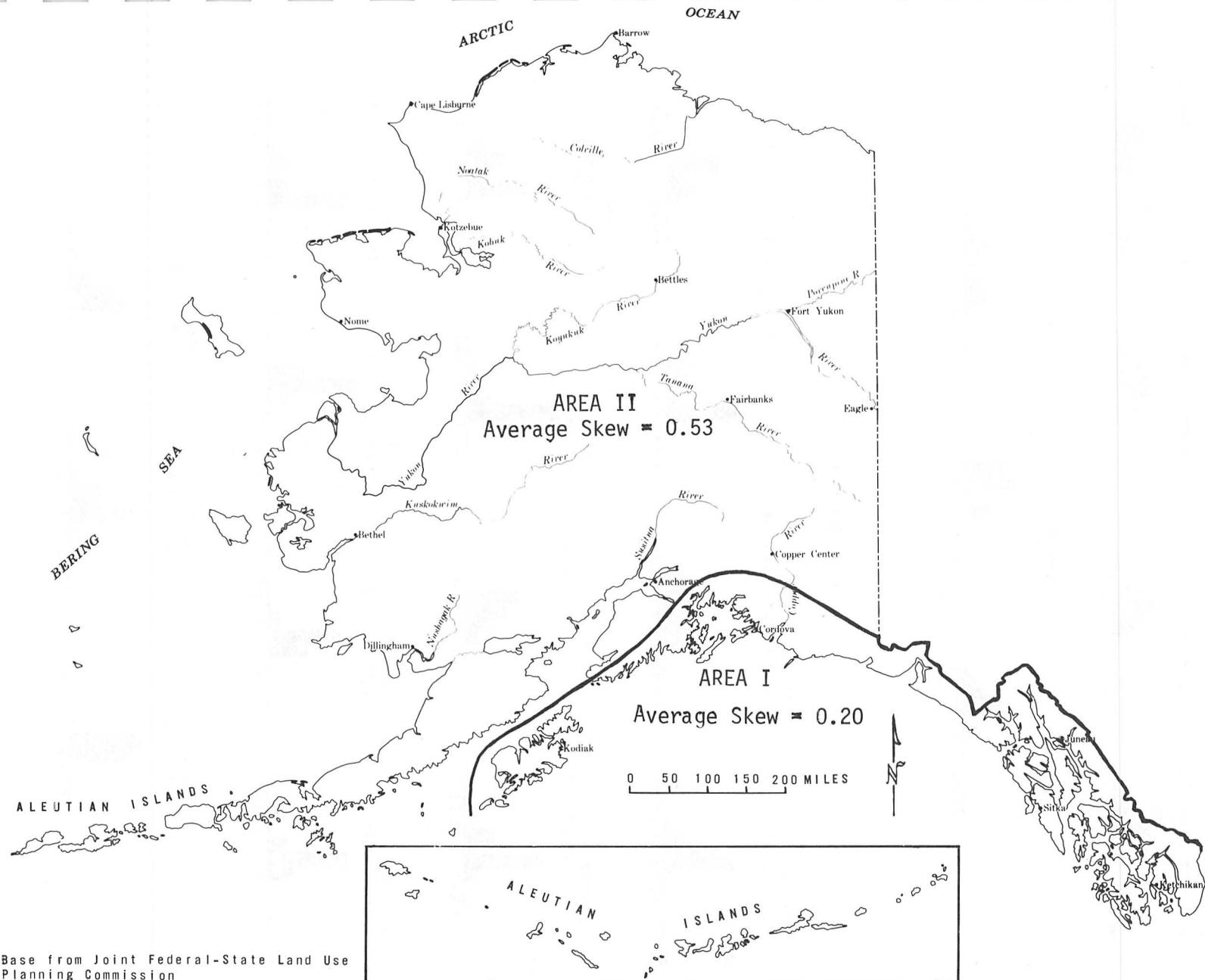
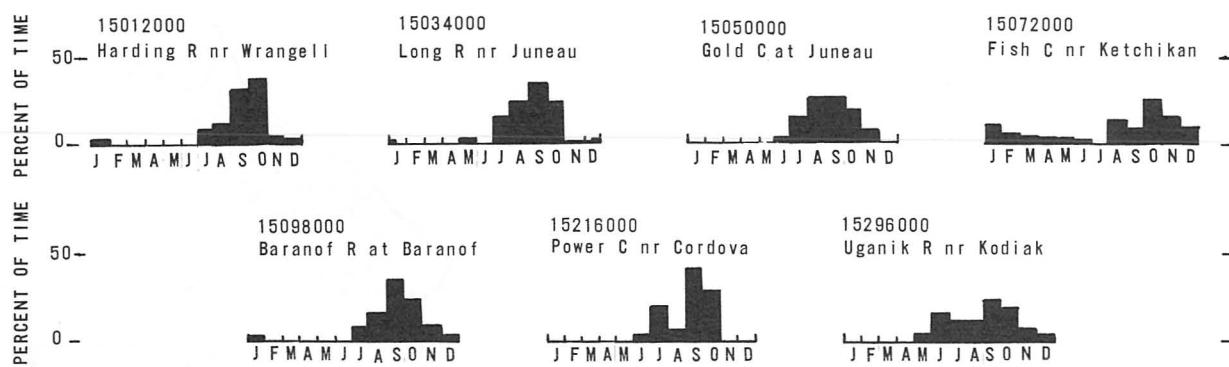


Figure 1.--Areas of Alaska used in the flood-frequency analysis.

## AREA I



## AREA II

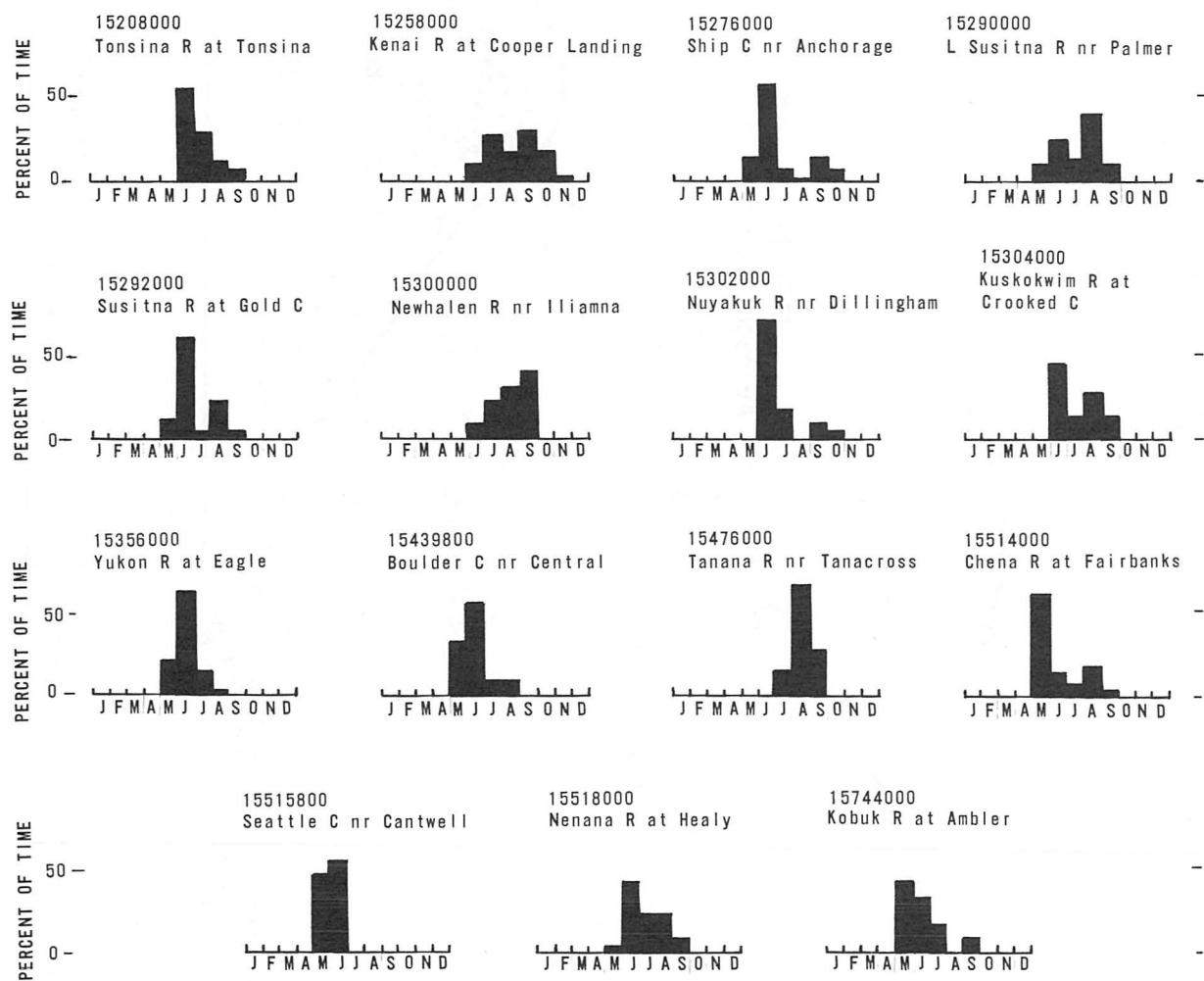


Figure 2.2--Time of occurrence of highest peak of the year at selected long-term gaging stations throughout Alaska.

## Area I

Area I consists of most areas in Alaska with a maritime climate, excluding the Aleutian Islands and the Pacific Ocean side of the Alaska Peninsula (Johnson and Hartman, 1969, plate 26). Area I includes those areas shown in figure 3 at the back of this report as the Kodiak-Shelikof area and southeast Alaska. It also includes that part of the Gulf of Alaska area south of the crest of the Chugach Mountains. The location of the stations used in the analysis is shown in figures 4-15 and 4-18 and in part of figure 4-17. Floods in maritime Alaska can occur any time during the year and generally are the result of rainstorms; most annual maximum peak discharges in Area I occur in August, September, and October (fig. 2).

### Analysis

In addition to the variables mentioned previously, a fourth variable, mean minimum January temperature ( $T + 1$ ), was found to be significant at the 5-percent level of significance. It is believed that ( $T + 1$ ) is an indirect geographic indicator of the probability of winter floods. (A value of 1 is added to avoid zero or negative values.) Because these analyses involved a varying and decreasing number of values based on actual flood peaks at the stations,  $P_{1.25}$  through  $P_{100}$ , the equations used to calculate  $Q_{1.25}$  through  $Q_{100}$  sometimes resulted in irregular answers that did not increase as  $Q_T$  increased. Table 6 lists resultant equations, standard errors, and number of stations used in the analyses.

To overcome these drawbacks, a different method of analysis was chosen. The method used is based on the log-Pearson Type III distribution of the annual series of flood events at a station (WRC, 1977, p. 9). The general equation for floods of selected exceedance probabilities ( $Q_T$ ) follows:

$$\text{Log } Q_T = \bar{X} + KS, \text{ where:}$$

$\bar{X}$  is the mean logarithm of the annual series,

$S$  is the standard deviation of the logarithms, and

$K$  is a factor that is a function of the skew coefficient and selected exceedance probability.

A variant of this equation was used in the present analysis to determine prediction equations for ungaged sites:

$$Q_T = CM^a D^k, \text{ where:}$$

$CM^a$  is the anti-log equivalent of  $\bar{X}$  for an ungaged site,

$D$  is the anti-log equivalent of  $S$  and

$k$  is an exponent that varies with the exceedance probability,

$C$  is a constant that varies with exceedance probability,

$M$  is an anti-log form of the mean (see below), and

$a$  is an exponent which is near a value of 1.00.

It was assumed that 10 years of flood record is sufficient to define the mean and standard deviations of the logarithms at each station. These logarithmic values are given in table 3 as "MEAN" and "SD". A multiple-regression analysis of  $\bar{X}$  and  $S$  at the 46 stations with 10 or more years of flood record was made using the basin characteristics. This resulted in two equations for a regional predictor of the mean value and the standard deviation:

$$M = 10.43 \frac{A^{0.812} P^{0.522} (T + 1)^{0.187}}{(St + 1)^{0.266}}$$

$$D = \frac{1.63}{(T + 1)^{0.049}}$$

The standard errors of the above equations were 38 and 9 percent, respectively, for the 46 values used.

The values of the constants ( $C$ ) and the exponents ( $a$ ) of each of the equations for  $Q_{1.25}$  through  $Q_{100}$  were determined by a multiple-regression of  $P_{1.25}$  through  $P_{100}$  in table 3 divided by  $D^k$ , calculated for each station listed in table 1, with the  $M$  values calculated for each station. The above equations were used to calculate  $M$  and  $D$ . The values of the exponent ( $k$ ) were determined from the table of  $K$  values in Appendix 3 of WRC Bulletin 17A for an average regional skew coefficient of 0.20, and the values were modified slightly to reduce the standard error. See table 3 for station skew coefficients.

EquationsStandard error

$Q_{1.25} = 1.02 \frac{M^{1.003}}{D^{0.85}}$	56 percent
$Q_2 = 1.16 \frac{M^{0.988}}{D^{0.05}}$	50 percent
$Q_5 = 1.24 M^{0.984} D^{0.70}$	48 percent
$Q_{10} = 0.97 M^{1.008} D^{1.30}$	45 percent
$Q_{25} = 0.66 M^{1.050} D^{1.85}$	48 percent
$Q_{50} = 0.70 M^{1.051} D^{2.20}$	42 percent

Discussion

The standard error of these equations cannot be calculated exactly. However, an approximation of the standard error was made. The standard errors of the equations presented above were slightly greater than for the equations in table 6. Most of the irregularities in the equations were removed (that is, there should be a gradual increase in the computed values from  $Q_{1.25}$  through  $Q_{50}$ ). However, no satisfactory equation could be determined for  $Q_{100}$ , partly because there are only 15 values of  $P_{100}$  to use in the regression. A reasonable estimate of  $Q_{100}$  can be made by using the exponent ( $k$ ) equal to 2.5 instead of equal to 2.2 in the formula for  $Q_{50}$ . Also, the equations can be irregular for drainage areas of less than two square miles. (For some combinations of basin characteristics,  $Q_{25}$  is less than  $Q_{10}$ .) The only local area where the equations seriously underestimated peaks was a small area about 30 (east and west) by 20 (north and south) miles around Ketchikan and eastward (fig. 4-18). For gaged streams with flood records, use the method shown on page 22 to determine the desired discharge at an ungaged site on the stream. Reasonable results can be obtained by multiplying the equation

results by 1.5 for ungaged streams in that area. This value of 1.5 is based on the average relation of the flood magnitudes computed by formulas,  $Q_{1.25}$  to  $Q_{50}$ , to the actual magnitudes,  $P_{1.25}$  to  $P_{50}$ , shown in table 3 for stations in the area.

### Area II

Area II consists of those parts of Alaska with transitional, continental, and arctic climates; also included are the Aleutian Islands and Pacific Ocean side of the Alaskan Peninsula (Johnson and Hartman, 1969, plate 26) which have a maritime climate. The annual maximum peak discharges generally occur between May and October (fig. 2). The most common cause of the peak flows on the larger streams is snowmelt or a combination of snowmelt and rainstorms that cover a large general area. However, the larger annual maximum peak discharges at a station are the result of widespread general rains in August or later. Often these peak flows are augmented by sustained snowmelt from higher elevations and glaciers. Occasionally, these peak discharges are also augmented by high discharges caused by breakouts from glacier-dammed lakes. The likelihood of the peak discharge of the year being caused by rainstorms rather than by other causes is greater for those streams with smaller drainage areas, with little capacity for storage, and with drainage areas at lower elevations.

It was not feasible to further subdivide Area II into smaller areas for analysis primarily because there are not enough long-term flood records; only 26 stations in the area have 18 or more years of record.

### Analysis

In addition to drainage area (A), mean annual precipitation (p), and area of lake storage ( $St + 1$ ), the basin characteristics for forested area ( $F + 1$ ) and mean minimum January temperatures ( $T + 30$ ) were found to be significant at the 5-percent level. These characteristics, ( $T + 30$ ) and ( $F + 1$ ), are believed to be indirect geographic indicators of the absence or presence of permafrost. For a given frequency of flood occurrence and similar values of A, p, and ( $St + 1$ ), the magnitude

of the flood is greater in a permafrost area than in a permafrost-free area because of the proximity to the surface of impermeable frozen soil. However, some permafrost areas have a deeper active layer of permafrost (the seasonally thawed layer of soil on top of the permafrost) than other areas. The presence of forested terrain in permafrost areas is a measure of the effect of the active layer.

The frequency curves using the equations derived from multiple-regression analysis were also irregular. (See table 6 for resultant equations and their standard errors.) The same method of suppressing the irregularities that was utilized to develop the equations for maritime Alaska was used here:

$$Q_T = C M^a D^k$$

The resultant solutions for M and D for the 100 sites with 10 or more years of flood records were:

	<u>Standard error</u>
$M = 1.94 \frac{A^{0.949} P^{0.762}}{(St + 1)^{0.192} (F + 1)^{0.148}}$	60 percent
$D = \frac{3.91}{A^{0.072} (T + 30)^{0.141}}$	30 percent

The values for the constants (C) and the exponents were determined in a manner similar to the method used for Area I. The values for the exponent (k) were taken from WRC Bulletin 17A for an average regional skew coefficient of 0.53.

#### Equations

	<u>Standard error</u>
$Q_{1.25} = 1.15 \frac{M^{0.984}}{D^{0.857}}$	83 percent
$Q_2 = 1.22 \frac{M^{0.977}}{D^{0.088}}$	77 percent
$Q_5 = 1.04 M^{0.988} D^{0.806}$	78 percent

$Q_{10} = 0.91 M^{0.999} D^{1.325}$	79 percent
$Q_{25} = 0.65 M^{1.025} D^{1.920}$	59 percent
$Q_{50} = 0.65 M^{1.024} D^{2.325}$	68 percent

### Discussion

In general, the comments on the results of the regression analysis are the same as for Area I. No satisfactory equations could be determined for  $Q_{100}$  because there were only 19 values of  $P_{100}$  to use in the regression. However, a reasonable estimate of  $Q_{100}$  can be made by using the exponent (k) equal to 2.707 instead of equal to 2.325 in the formula for  $Q_{50}$ . The lower limit on drainage area for which these equations should be used to predict flood magnitudes and frequencies is one square mile.

The Aleutian Islands and the Pacific Ocean side of the Alaska Peninsula are included in Area II, even though the climate is maritime and flood peaks can occur in the wintertime. There are few flood records for the area. Only the three sites on Amchitka Island with 5 to 7 years of record were used in this analysis. The preliminary regression studies showed that the equations developed for Area II defined the flood magnitude and frequency relations for these three stations better than the equations for Area I.

The only area in which the equations for Area II appear to overestimate peaks is the Anchorage bowl area from Campbell Creek to Meadow Creek. It is difficult to determine the precipitation (p) for sites in the Anchorage bowl from figure 4-16. The flood peaks used in the analysis were for essentially nonurbanized conditions; urbanization will increase future peak flows. If these equations are used to estimate peaks in the Anchorage area, the results should be multiplied by a factor of about 0.5. (See page 12 for an example of the method used to determine this factor.) For greater accuracy, the most recent log-Pearson Type III analysis for gaging stations in the area may be used and the magnitude and frequency values can be transferred to the ungaged site. The magnitude

of the flood discharge for a given frequency at an ungaged site can be estimated by first computing  $Q_T$  for the ungaged site and also for a nearby gaged site with similar basin characteristics, and then multiplying the ratio of the above two  $Q_T$  values by the flood magnitude at the gaged site for the given frequency determined by log-Pearson Type III analysis.

Actual flood peaks on the small streams between Healy and Nenana, in the Livengood area, and near Chena Hot Springs were also higher than would be expected from the equations. Those streams are in an area affected by the 1967 flood (an extraordinary flood), and the 1967 flood values were used in the analysis. Applying a correction factor to the results probably is not warranted.

There is a probability that these equations underestimate the flood peak values for northwest Alaska and the Arctic Slope of Alaska (fig. 3). Only eleven sites in these regions were used in the regression equation, and the longest period of record is 11 years. The precipitation maps (figs. 4-1 through 4-5) may also underestimate the precipitation for these regions. The records of wintertime snow depths, expressed as inches of precipitation, are known to be too low. This problem has been recognized by several agencies, notably the Soil Conservation Service, National Weather Service, Cold Regions Research Engineering Laboratory, and the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska. During the summer there are only a few precipitation stations operating in these regions. The shortage of precipitation records is most evident for mountainous areas away from the Arctic Ocean. A multiplicative correction factor of 1.7 may be arbitrarily applied to the equation results. The factor is the average ratio of  $P_T$  to  $Q_T$  for stations in northwest Alaska and Arctic Slope of Alaska. A flood-magnitude and frequency study should be periodically updated; by the time the next study is made, a more accurate precipitation map may be available for these two regions. At that time, there will be more sites with peak records and a longer period of record for many of the stations shown in table 4.

## REMARKS AND CAUTIONS

No attempt is made in the present study to predict the discharges of glacier-dammed lakes. Some flood values for streams affected by outbursts are presented in tables 3 and 4. General criteria used to determine which of the stations affected by outburst floods would be included in the analysis were: (1) an outburst flood peak that occurred within any given year might or might not be the highest peak of the year and (2) the magnitude of the outburst peaks was in the same general range as peak flows resulting from other causes.

Stream-gaging records long enough (5 years or more) to make a log-Pearson Type III analysis generally provide more reliable estimates of peak flow at the gages in Alaska than the equations do. (See Childers, 1970, p. 16, for an example.) Therefore, a logical extension of this statement would be that if the ungaged site is on the same stream as a gaged site and if there are no large differences between basin characteristics for the two sites, then the flood values obtained at the gaged site should be modified for the differences in basin characteristics and used for the ungaged site. No guidelines for establishing limits on adjusting a flood value determined at a gaged site to an ungaged site are presented. However, the user should be cautious in making such adjustments. See pages 14 and 15 for an explanation of the method to use; an example is shown on page 22.

Flood records of short length (5 to 9 years) can be used to determine a discharge for a low exceedance probability. For example, suppose the discharge for a flood with an exceedance probability of 2 percent (50-year recurrence interval) is needed at a station with 7 years of record.  $Q_{50}$  and  $Q_5$  can be computed for the site, and  $P_5$  can be determined by log-Pearson Type III analysis. The desired discharge can then be determined by multiplying the ratio of  $Q_{50}$  to  $Q_5$  by  $P_5$ ; see the example on page 20. The user might want to average the discharge computed by the above method and  $Q_{50}$ . For a more detailed discussion of the recommended guidelines for refinements of frequency curves with 10 or more years of

flood record at a gaging station consult pages 17 through 20 of WRC Bulletin 17A (1977).

There are large geographic areas of Alaska for which there are no flood records; figures 4-1 through 4-18 show the location of gaging stations that provide these records. The reliability of the flood prediction equations is less certain for those station-less areas than areas for which flood records have been obtained. Figures 4-1 through 4-18 also show lines of equal intensity for precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures.

Data that can be used to estimate the size of large floods that might be expected at ungaged sites are presented in table 5. The table lists maximum known discharges for all Alaskan gaging stations and miscellaneous sites. A plot comparing the maximum known floods in cubic feet per second per square mile [ $(\text{ft}^3/\text{s})/\text{mi}^2$ ] and the drainage area for the sites in the area of concern can be prepared and an envelope curve drawn. The peak discharge at the ungaged site can be estimated by using the value in  $(\text{ft}^3/\text{s})/\text{mi}^2$  from the envelope curve and a measured drainage area. The peak magnitude thus determined would have an unknown frequency of occurrence or exceedance probability.

The standard error of estimate is a statistical measurement of the reliability of the equations and is expressed as a percentage of the average value of the characteristic being analyzed. The standard error is an estimated limit within which about two-thirds of the true long-term values of the predicted characteristic are expected to fall. Thus, for a standard error of 80 percent, two-thirds of the actual flood magnitudes at an ungaged site should lie between approximately 56 percent ( $100/1.80$ ) and 180 percent ( $100 \times 1.80$ ) of their predicted value.

As explained on pages 21 and 22 of WRC Bulletin 17A, these equations predict the flow exceedance probability, not the risk. There is a two-percent chance that  $Q_{50}$  (a discharge with an average recurrence interval of 50 years) will be exceeded in a given year. However, there is a 50-percent chance that the flood discharge with an annual exceedance probability of two percent ( $Q_{50}$ ) will be exceeded one or more times in the

next 34 years (from fig. 10-1 of WRC Bulletin 17A).

#### Area I

The equations given in this report should not be used for the large rivers breaching the mountains along the United States-Canada border in southeast Alaska or the main stem of the Copper River. The equations for Area I can be used for the streams tributary to the Copper River south of the crest of the Chugach Mountains. A correction factor to the equations of 1.5 is suggested for a small area near Ketchikan for ungaged streams. (See p. 11 and fig. 4-18.) For sites on gaged streams, flood data from the gaged site can be transferred to the site in question.

#### Area II

Equations for Area II should be used for Copper River tributaries north of the crest of the Chugach Mountains. A correction factor of 1.7 is suggested if the equations are used for northwest and Arctic Slope Alaska. It is also suggested that the prediction equations for ungaged sites be used with caution for the Anchorage bowl area; to avoid unreliable results, either a correction factor of 0.5 may be applied or flood data from ~~engaged~~ sites can be transferred to the site in question.

## EXAMPLES OF CALCULATIONS

### Area I

Problem: Compute  $Q_2$  and  $Q_{50}$  for a stream with the following pertinent basin characteristics:

$$A = \text{drainage area} = 33.9 \text{ mi}^2$$

$$p = \text{annual precipitation} = 160 \text{ in.}$$

$$T = \text{mean minimum January temperature} = 28^\circ\text{F}$$

$$St = \text{area of lakes and ponds or "storage"} = 12 \text{ percent}$$

Solution:

First, determine M and D:

$$\begin{aligned} M &= 10.43 \frac{A^{0.812} p^{0.522} (T + 1)^{0.187}}{(St + 1)^{0.266}} \\ &= 10.43 \frac{(33.9)^{0.812} (160)^{0.522} (29)^{0.187}}{(13)^{0.266}} \\ &= 2,450 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s} \text{ (cubic feet per second).} \end{aligned}$$

$$D = \frac{1.63}{(T + 1)^{0.049}} = \frac{1.63}{(29)^{0.049}} = 1.38$$

Next, use the formula for  $Q_2$ :

$$Q_2 = 1.16 \frac{M^{0.988}}{D^{0.05}} = 1.16 \frac{(2,450)^{0.988}}{(1.38)^{0.05}} = 2,550 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}$$

Finally, use the formula for  $Q_{50}$ :

$$\begin{aligned} Q_{50} &= 0.70 M^{1.051} D^{2.20} \\ &= 0.70 (2,450)^{1.051} (1.38)^{2.20} = 5,190 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s} \end{aligned}$$

Problem: Assume that the site used in the computations on the preceding page has six years of flood record. The discharge with an exceedance probability of two percent is desired.

$$P_5 = 3,580 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s} \text{ from Log-Pearson Type III analysis}$$

$$Q_{50} = 5,190 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}$$

Solution:

First, determine  $Q_5$ :

$$Q_5 = 1.24 M^{0.984} D^{0.70}$$

$$= 1.24 (2,450)^{0.984} (1.38)^{0.70} = 3,360 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}$$

Next, determine the desired discharge:

$$\begin{aligned} Q_T &= \frac{Q_{50}}{Q_5} \times P_5 \\ &= \frac{5,190}{3,360} \times 3,580 = 5,530 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s} \end{aligned}$$

## Area II

Problem: Compute  $Q_{50}$  for a river with the following pertinent basin characteristics.

$$A = 1,910 \text{ mi}^2$$

$$p = 40 \text{ in.}$$

$$T = -8^\circ\text{F}$$

$$St = 1 \text{ percent}$$

$$F = \text{area of forests} = 8 \text{ percent}$$

Solution:

Use the formula for  $Q_{50}$ :

$$Q_{50} = 0.65 M^{1.024} D^{2.325}$$

$$\text{or } Q_{50} = 0.65 \left[ 1.94 \frac{A^{0.949} p^{0.762}}{(St + 1)^{0.192} (F + 1)^{0.148}} \right]^{1.024}$$

$$\text{multiplied by} \left[ \frac{3.91}{A^{0.072} (T + 30)^{0.141}} \right]^{2.325}$$

$$= 0.65 \left[ 1.94 \frac{(1,910)^{0.949} (40)^{0.762}}{(2)^{0.192} (9)^{0.148}} \right]^{1.024}$$

$$\text{multiplied by} \left[ \frac{3.91}{(1,910)^{0.072} (22)^{0.141}} \right]^{2.325} = 54,500 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s.}$$

Problem: An alternate answer is desired for  $Q_{50}$  at the above ungauged site. There is a gage upstream with a long record. The pertinent basin and flow characteristics at the gage are:

$$A = 1,310 \text{ mi}^2$$

$$p = 38 \text{ in.}$$

$$T = -8^\circ\text{F}$$

$$St = 2 \text{ percent}$$

$$F = 7 \text{ percent}$$

$$P_{50} = 28,500 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}$$

Solution:

First, determine  $Q_{50}$  for the gaged site:

M was determined as  $16,800 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}$  and D as 1.508.

$$\begin{aligned} Q_{50} &= 0.65 M^{1.024} D^{2.325} \\ &= 0.65 (16,800)^{1.024} (1.508)^{2.325} = 36,200 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}. \end{aligned}$$

Next, determine the desired discharge:

$$\begin{aligned} Q_T &= \frac{Q_{50} \text{ at site}}{Q_{50} \text{ at gage}} \times P_{50} \text{ at gage} \\ &= \frac{54,500}{36,200} \times 28,500 = 42,900 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}. \end{aligned}$$

If the above value and the previously computed  $Q_{50}$  for the ungauged site are given equal weight, the design discharge would be  $48,700 \text{ ft}^3/\text{s}$ .

#### REFERENCES CITED

- Childers, J. M., 1970, Flood frequency in Alaska: U.S. Geological Survey open-file report, 30 p.
- Johnson, P. R., and Hartman, C. W., 1969, Environmental atlas of Alaska: University of Alaska, Institute of Arctic Environmental Engineering and Institute of Water Resources, 111 p.
- National Weather Service, 1972, Mean annual precipitation-- inches: National Weather Service [Alaska], map.
- Post, Austin, and Mayo, L. R., 1971, Glacier dammed lakes and outburst floods in Alaska: U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Investigation Atlas HA-455.
- U.S. Water Resources Council, 1977, Guidelines for determining flood flow frequencies: U.S. Water Resources Council Bulletin 17A, 106 p.









Table 2.--Basin characteristics of Area II gages--Continued.

Station no.	Station name	Location (Degrees)	Longitude (Degrees)	Drainage area (mi <sup>2</sup> )
15442500	QUARTZ C NR CENTRAL AK	65.6200	144.4300	17.2000
15457400	HESS C NR LIVENGOOD AK	65.6700	149.0900	662.0000
15468000	YUKON R AT RAMPART AK	65.5100	150.1700	199400.0000
15469900	SILVER C NR NORTHWAY JUNCTION AK	62.9800	141.6700	11.7000
15470000	CHISANA R AT NORTHWAY JCT AK	63.0100	141.8000	3280.0000
15471000	PITTERS C NR NORTHWAY JUNCTION AK	63.1600	142.0400	15.4000
15471500	TANANA R TR NR TETLIN JUNCTION AK	63.2800	142.5100	2.4300
15473600	LOG CABIN C NR LOG CABIN INN AK	63.0200	143.3400	10.7000
15473950	CLEARWATER C NR TOK AK	63.1600	143.1400	36.4000
15476000	TANANA R AT TANACROSS AK	63.3400	143.7500	4550.0000
15476050	TANANA R TR NR TANACROSS AK	63.4100	143.8000	3.3200
15476200	TANANA R TR NR DOT LAKE AK	63.6900	144.2900	11.0000
15476300	BERRY C NR DOT LK AK	63.6900	144.3600	65.1000
15476400	DRY C NR DOT LK AK	63.6900	144.5700	57.6000
15477000	TANANA R AT BIG DELTA AK	64.1600	145.8500	13500.0000
15478010	ROCK C NR PAXSON AK	63.0700	146.1000	50.3000
15478040	PHFLAN C NR PAXSON AK	63.2400	145.4600	12.2000
15478050	MCCALLUM C NR PAXSON AK	63.2200	145.6500	15.5000
15478500	PURY C NR DONNELL AK	63.6300	145.8800	5.3200
15480000	RANNER C AT RICHARDSON AK	64.2900	146.3500	20.2000
15484000	SALCHA R NR SALCHAKET AK	64.4700	146.9200	2170.0000
15490000	MONUMENT C AT CHENA HOT SPRINGS AK	65.0500	146.0500	26.7000
15493000	CHENA R NR TWO RIVERS AK	64.9000	146.4100	941.0000
15511000	L. CHENA R NR FAIRBANKS AK	64.8900	147.2500	372.0000
15511500	STEELE R NR FAIRBANKS AK	64.8900	147.4900	10.7000
15514000	CHENA R AT FAIRBANKS AK	64.8500	147.7000	1980.0000
15514500	WOOD R NR FAIRBANKS AK	64.4400	148.2100	855.0000
15515500	TANANA R AT NFNANA AK	64.5700	149.0900	25600.0000
15515800	SEATTLE C NR CANTWELL AK	63.3300	148.2500	36.2000
15515900	LILY C NR CANTWELL AK	63.3300	148.2700	5.6300
15516000	NENANA R NR WINDY AK	63.4600	148.8000	710.0000
15516200	SLIME C NR CANTWELL AK	63.5100	148.8100	6.9000
15518000	NENANA R NR HEALY AK	63.8500	148.9400	1910.0000
15518100	L. PANGUINGUE C NR LIGNITE AK	63.9300	149.1000	3.4400
15518200	POCK C NR FERRY AK	64.0300	149.1400	8.1700
15518250	RICK C NR REX AK	64.1800	149.2900	4.1000
15518350	TEKLANIKA R NR LIGNITE AK	63.9200	149.5000	490.0000
15519000	BRIDGE C NR LIVENGOOD AK	65.4600	148.2500	12.6000
15519200	PROOKS C TH NR LIVENGOOD AK	65.3800	148.9400	7.8100
15520000	IDAHO C NR MILLAR HOUSE AK	65.3500	146.1700	5.3100
15530000	FAITH C NR CHENA HOT SPRINGS AK	65.2900	146.3800	61.1000
15535000	CARTIQU C NR CHATANIIKA AK	65.1500	147.5500	9.1900
15541400	GLOHE C NR LIVENGOOD AK	65.2800	148.1400	23.0000
15541650	GLOOF C TH NR LIVENGOOD AK	65.2800	148.1200	9.0100
15541800	WASHINGTON C NR FOX AK	65.1500	147.8600	46.7000
15564600	MELVITINA R NR RUHY AK	64.7900	155.5600	2693.0000
15564800	YUKON R AT RUHY AK	64.7400	155.4900	259000.0000
15564875	MF KOYUKUK R NR WISEMAN AK	67.4300	150.0800	1426.0000
15564877	WISEMAN C AT WISEMAN AK	67.4100	150.1100	49.2000
15564885	JIM R NR PETTLES AK	66.7800	150.8700	465.0000
15564900	KOYUKUK R AT HUGHES AK	66.0500	154.2600	18700.0000
15555200	YUKON R NR KALTAG AK	64.3300	158.7200	296000.0000
15621000	SNAKE R NR NOME AK	64.5600	165.5100	85.7000
15625000	ARTIC C NR NOME AK	64.6400	165.7100	1.7600
15633000	WASHINGTON C NR NOME AK	64.7100	165.8200	6.3400
15668100	STAR C NR NOME AK	64.9300	164.9600	3.7800
15668200	CHAFER C NK NOME AK	64.9300	164.8700	21.9000
15712000	KUZITRIN R NR NOME AK	65.2200	164.6200	1720.0000
15744000	KOHUK R AT AMBLER AK	67.0400	157.8500	6570.0000
15746000	NOATAK R AT NOATAK AK	67.5700	162.9400	12000.0000
15748000	OGOTORUK R NR POINT HOPE AK	68.1100	165.7500	34.9000
15896000	KUPAPUK R NR DEADHORSE AK	70.2800	148.9600	3130.0000
15910000	SAGAVANIRKTOK R NR SAGWON AK	69.0900	148.7500	2208.0000

#### Drainage Basin Characteristics

Precipitation and topographic characteristics of drainage basins at the gaging stations are tabulated above. Precipitation characteristics were determined from National Weather Service publications. Topographic characteristics were computed from the latest U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps. Basin characteristics are defined as follows:

Drainage area: in square miles, is the total drainage area upstream from the gaging station or measurement site. The area is measured in a horizontal plane and is enclosed by a drainage divide.

Main-channel slope: in feet per mile, is the average slope between points 10 percent and 85 percent of the distance along the main stream from the gaging site to the basin divide.

Stream length: in miles, is the length of the main channel between the gaging station and the basin divide measured along the channel that drains the largest basin.

Mean basin elevation: in feet above mean sea level, is the mean elevation of the drainage basin measured by the grid-sampling method from topographic maps.

Area of lakes and ponds: in percent, is the percentage of the total drainage area occupied by lakes and ponds. This is measured by the grid-sampling method from topographic maps having a blue overprint which indicates lakes and ponds.





















Table 6.--First version of prediction equations for flood magnitude and frequency.

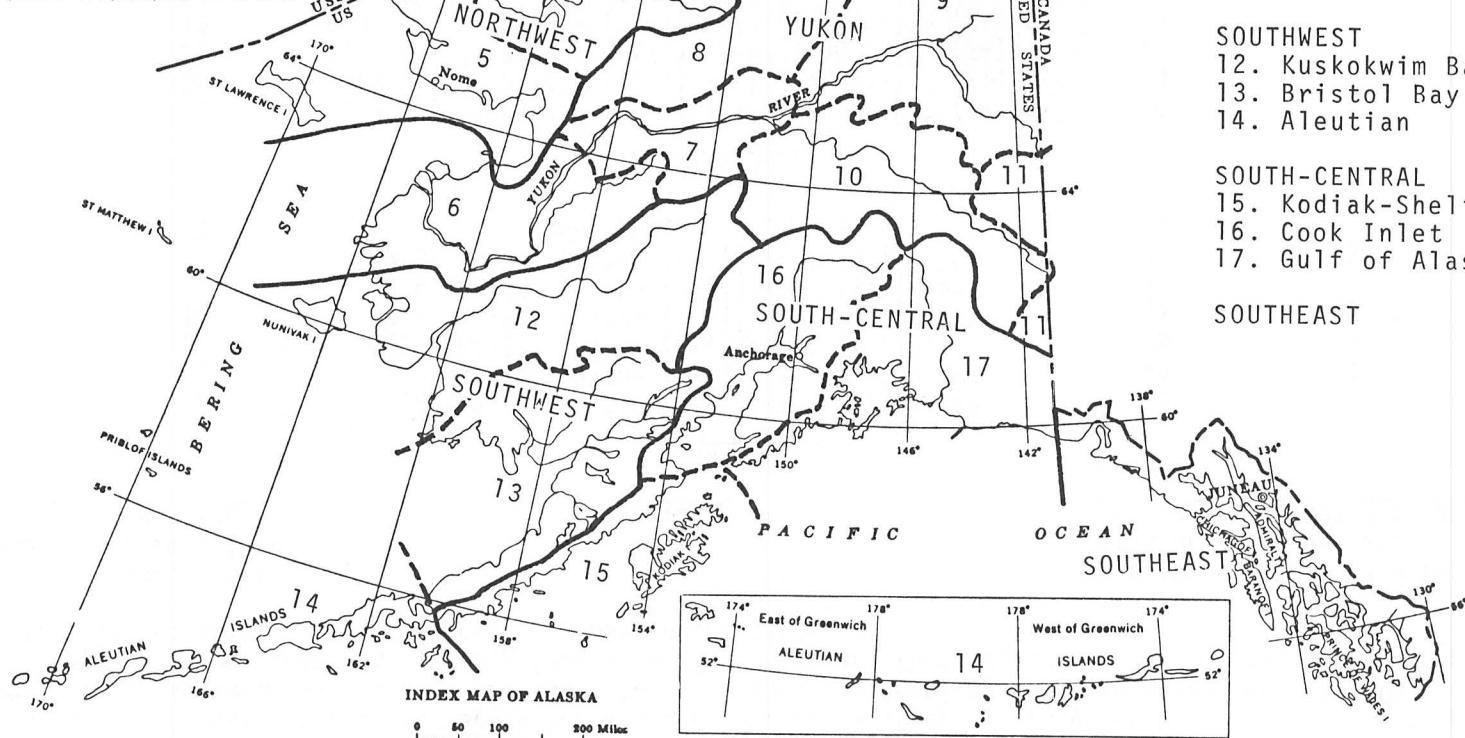
Formulas for computing flood discharges for a given recurrence interval are given below. These formulas were superseded. If these formulas are used, be aware that for some combinations of basin characteristics Q<sub>50</sub> might be lower than Q<sub>25</sub>, Q<sub>25</sub> lower than Q<sub>10</sub>, and Q<sub>10</sub> lower than Q<sub>5</sub>. However, these equations have a lower standard error than the equations in the text. The difference is shown in the table.

<u>Recurrence interval</u>	<u>Exceedance probability in percent</u>	<u>Formulas</u>	<u>Percent standard error</u>	<u>Difference in percent standard error</u>	<u>Number of sites</u>
<u>Area I</u>					
1.25	80	7.62 A <sup>0.819</sup> p <sup>0.556</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.175</sup> (T+1) <sup>0.120</sup>	54	2	97
2	50	12.2 A <sup>0.813</sup> p <sup>0.500</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.201</sup> (T+1) <sup>0.162</sup>	49	1	97
5	20	21.9 A <sup>0.812</sup> p <sup>0.442</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.218</sup> (T+1) <sup>0.163</sup>	48	0	97
10	10	20.6 A <sup>0.824</sup> p <sup>0.482</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.266</sup> (T+1) <sup>0.172</sup>	45	0	64
25	4	14.9 A <sup>0.827</sup> p <sup>0.660</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.324</sup> (T+1) <sup>0.058</sup>	47	1	33
50	2	42.8 A <sup>0.894</sup> p <sup>0.546</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.185</sup> (T+1) <sup>-.161</sup>	39	3	21
100	1	-Not Shown-	--	-	15
<u>Area II</u>					
1.25	80	1.59 A <sup>0.980</sup> p <sup>0.816</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.127</sup> (T+30) <sup>-.095</sup> (F+1) <sup>-.258</sup>	79	4	163
2	50	5.73 A <sup>0.925</sup> p <sup>0.735</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.171</sup> (T+30) <sup>-.189</sup> (F+1) <sup>-.252</sup>	73	4	163
5	20	16.5 A <sup>0.877</sup> p <sup>0.692</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.205</sup> (T+30) <sup>-.287</sup> (F+1) <sup>-.224</sup>	75	3	163
10	10	19.8 A <sup>0.856</sup> p <sup>0.709</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.218</sup> (T+30) <sup>-.318</sup> (F+1) <sup>-.157</sup>	78	1	132
25	4	13.1 A <sup>0.837</sup> p <sup>0.758</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.193</sup> (T+30) <sup>-.244</sup> (F+1) <sup>-.104</sup>	58	1	50
50	2	6.44 A <sup>0.816</sup> p <sup>0.477</sup> (St+1) <sup>-.315</sup> (T+30) <sup>0.268</sup> (F+1) <sup>0.084</sup>	58	10	26
100	1	-Not Shown-	--	--	19

**EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS USED IN FIGURES 4-1  
THROUGH 4-18.**

- 2580      ▲ Active stations used in analysis
- 2610      △ Discontinued stations used in analysis  
Station numbers are without state prefix 15
- 40 — Mean annual precipitation (inches) from National Weather Service (1972)
- -8° — Mean minimum January temperature (°F) from Johnson and Hartman (1969)
- Area boundary

Base for following figures from U.S. Geological Survey map E (scale 1:2,500,000) of Alaska



**MAP INDEX**

**ARCTIC**

1. West Arctic
2. Colville
3. East Arctic

**NORTHWEST**

4. Kotzebue Sound
5. Norton Sound

**YUKON**

6. Lower Yukon
7. Central Yukon
8. Koyukuk
9. Upper Yukon
10. Tanana
11. Upper Yukon-Canada

**SOUTHWEST**

12. Kuskokwim Bay
13. Bristol Bay
14. Aleutian

**SOUTH-CENTRAL**

15. Kodiak-Shelikof
16. Cook Inlet
17. Gulf of Alaska

**SOUTHEAST**



Figure 3.--Map index and symbols used in figures 4-1 through 4-18.

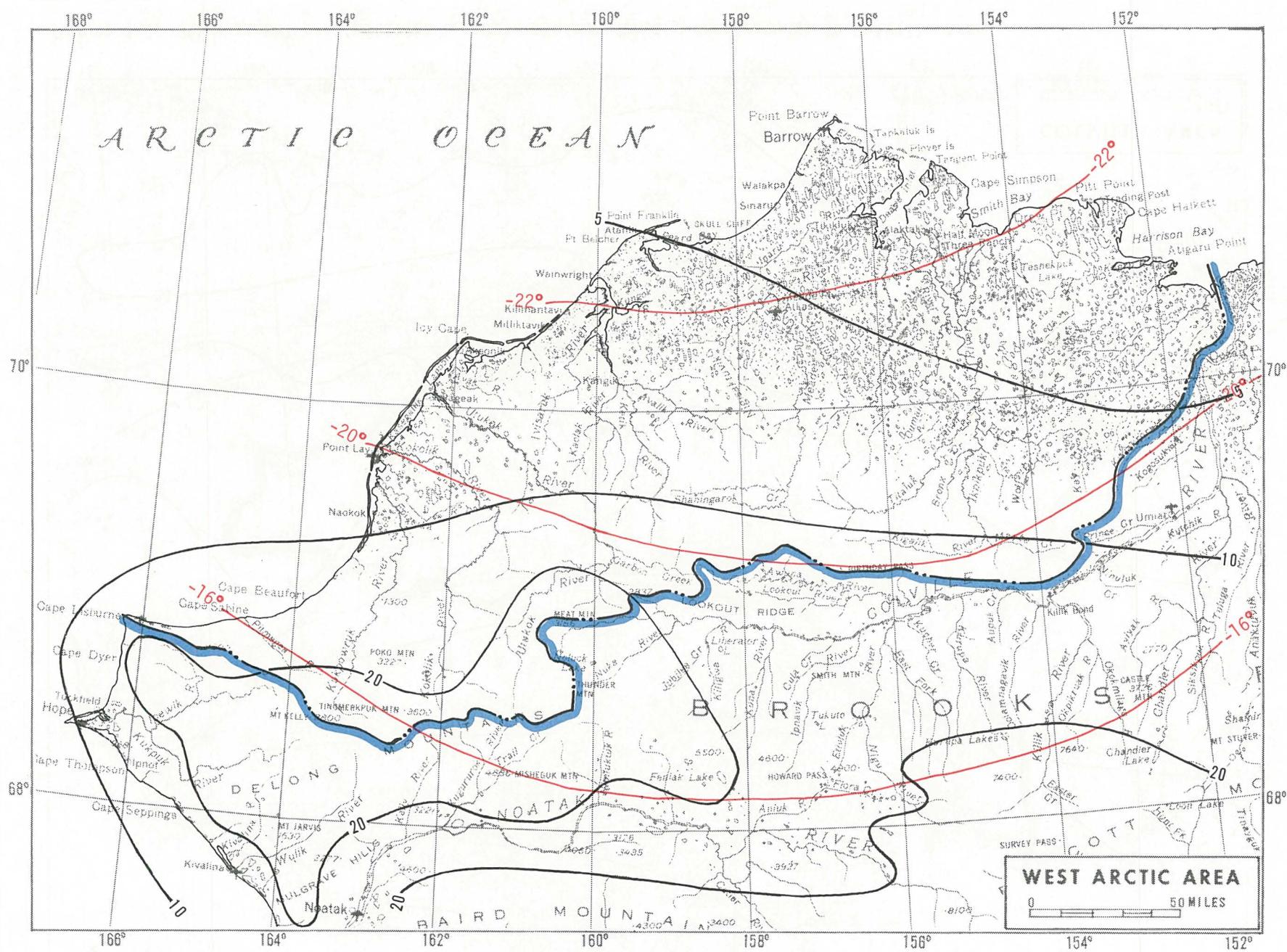


Figure 4-1.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in west Arctic area.

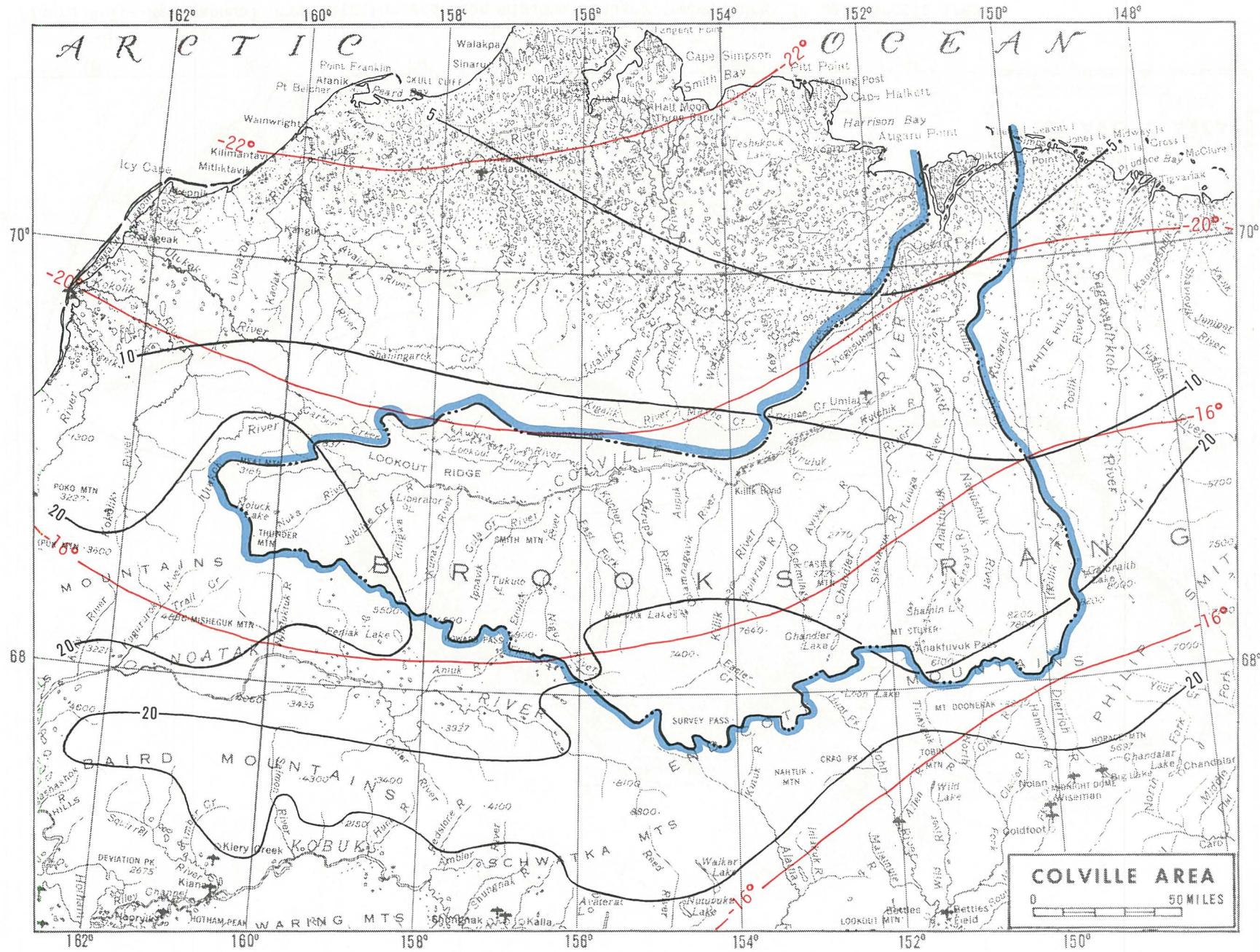


Figure 4-2.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Colville area.

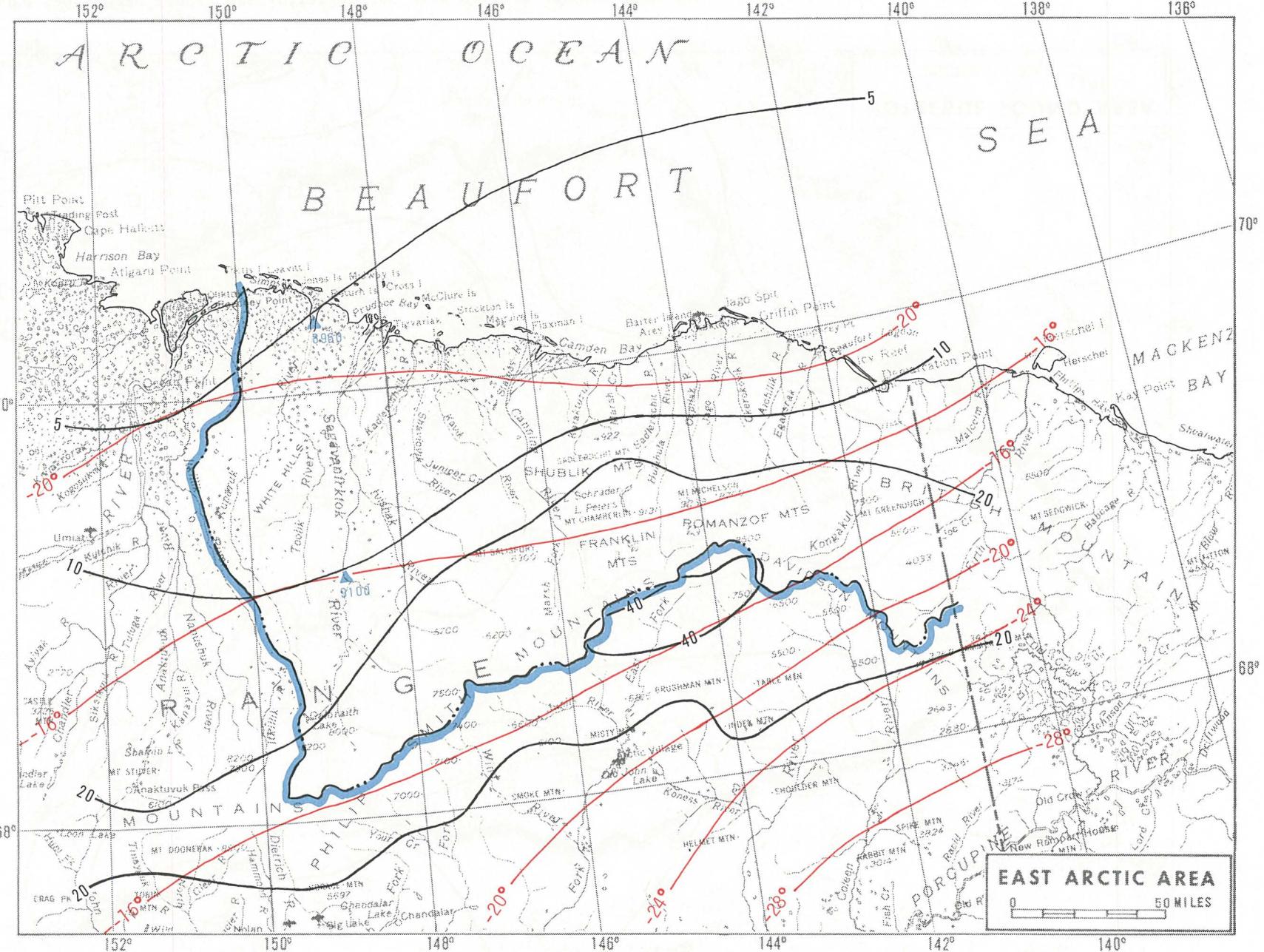


Figure 4-3.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in east Arctic area.

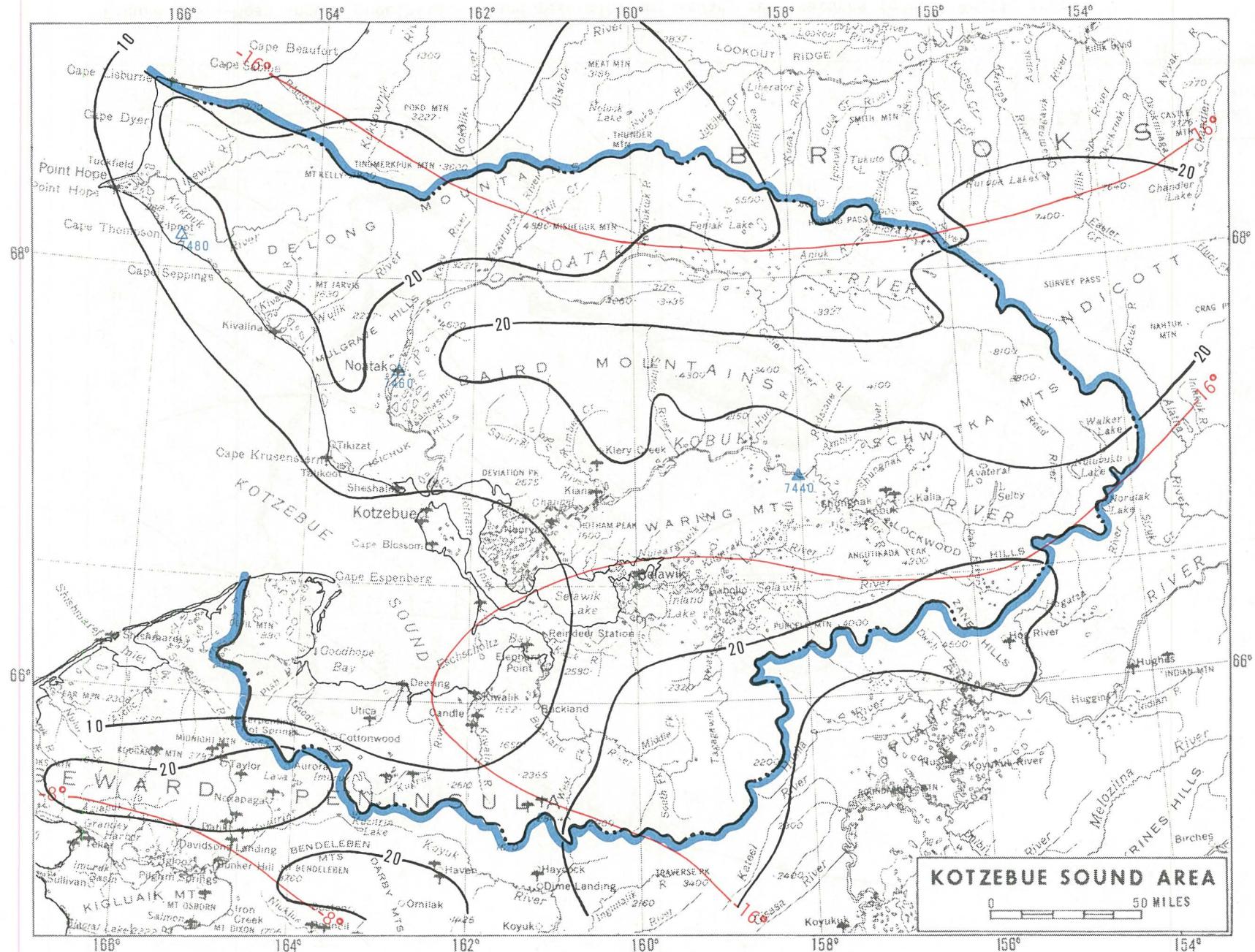


Figure 4-4.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Kotzebue Sound area.

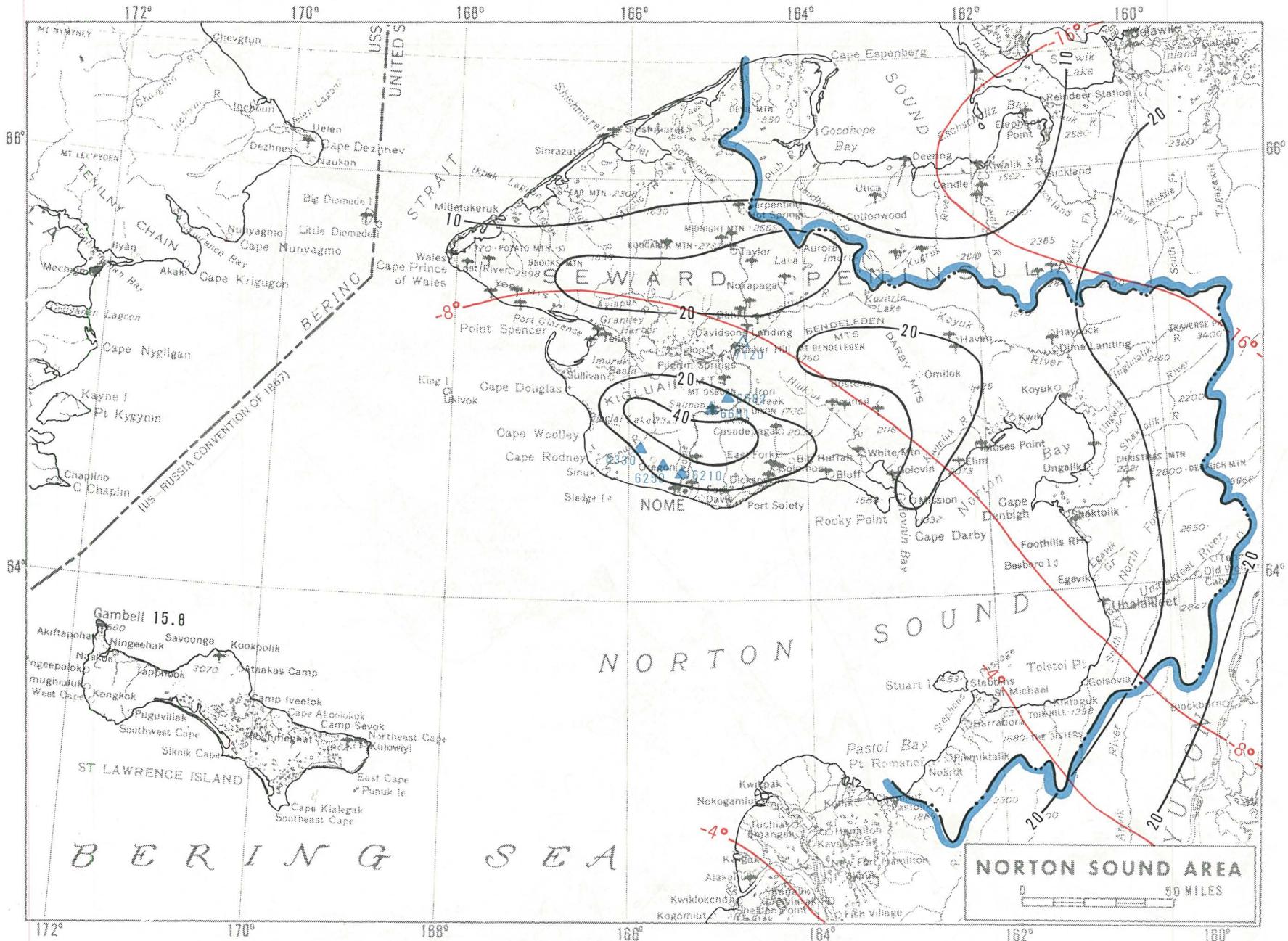


Figure 4-5.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Norton Sound area.

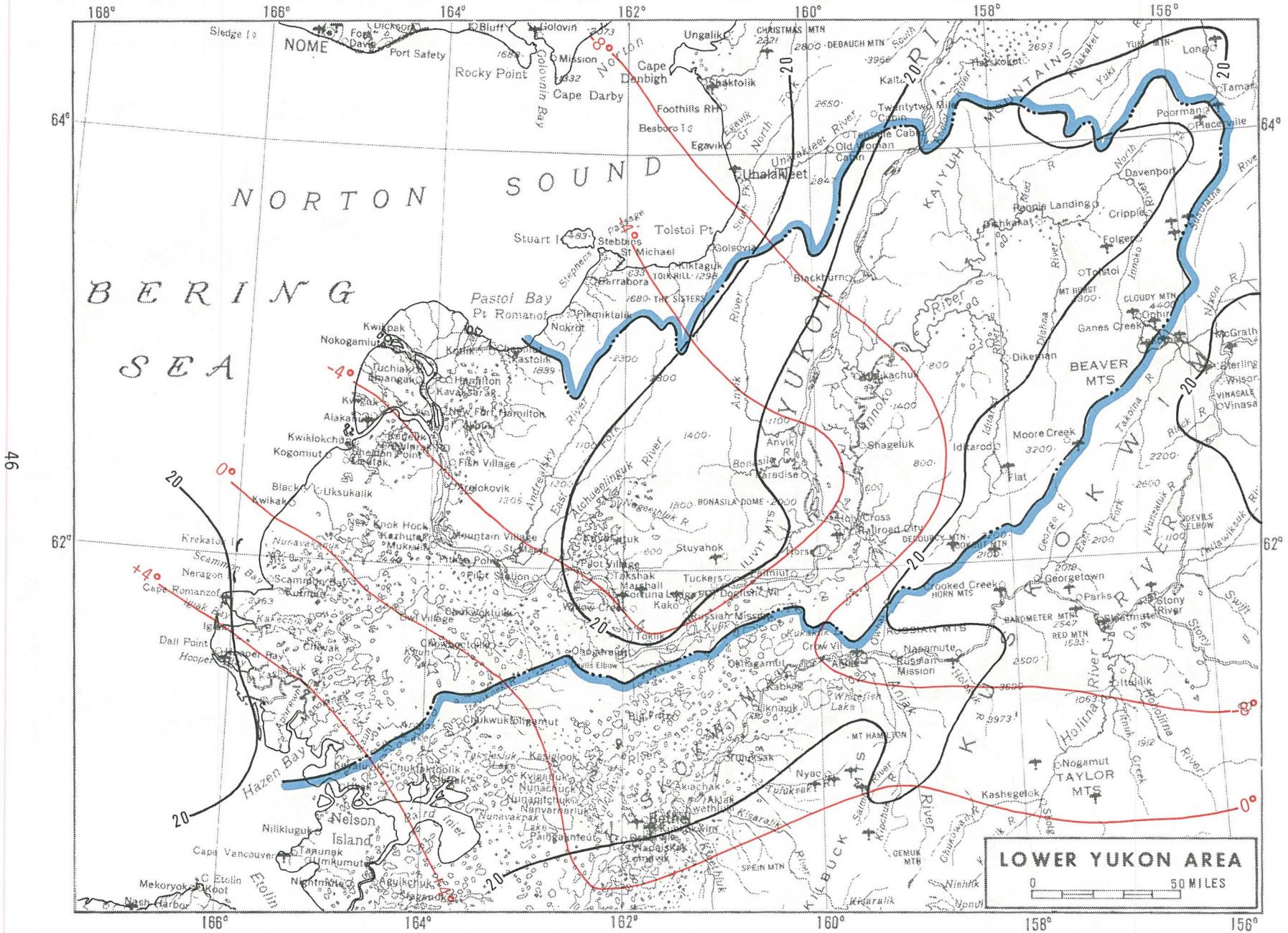


Figure 4-6.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in lower Yukon area.

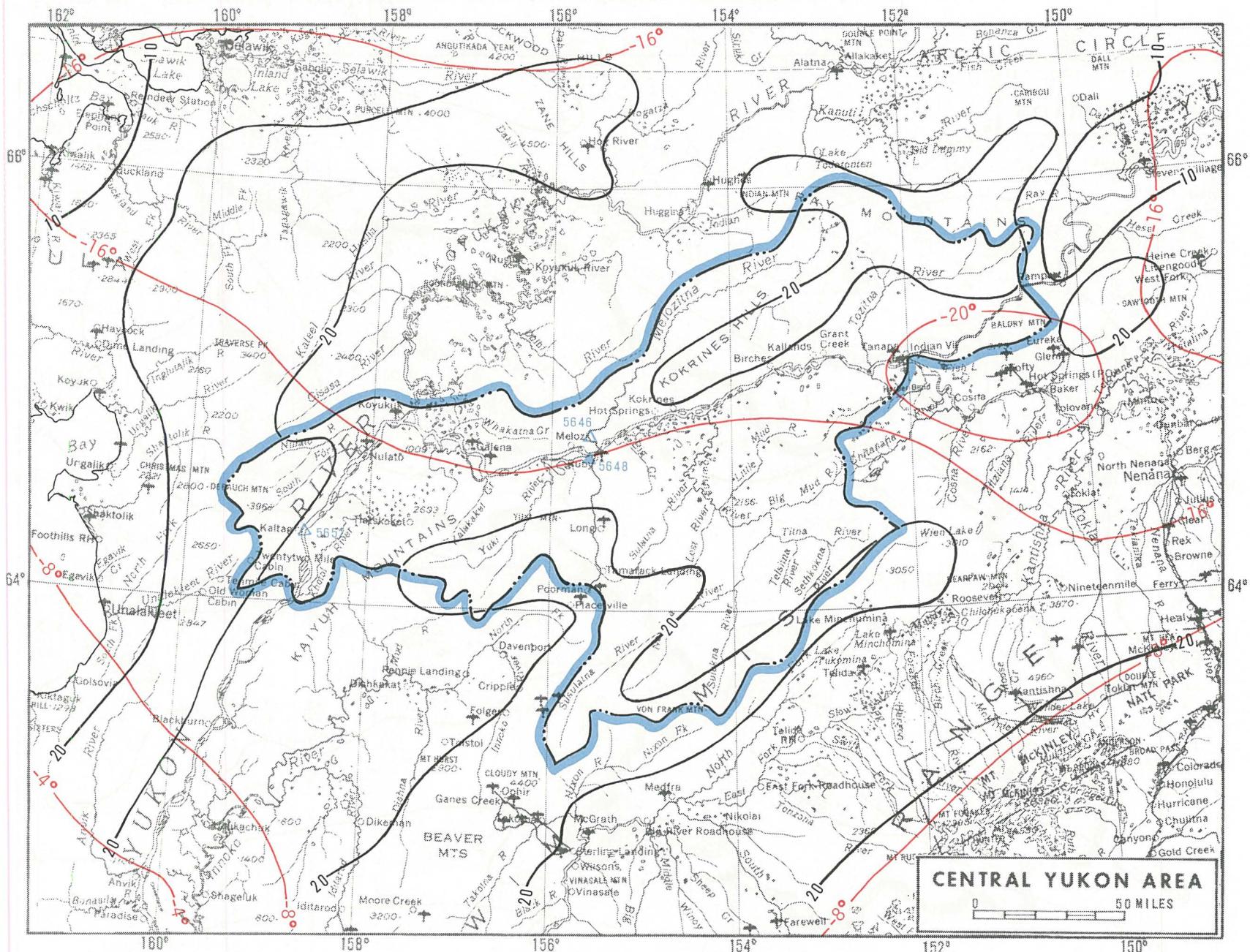


Figure 4-7.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in central Yukon area.

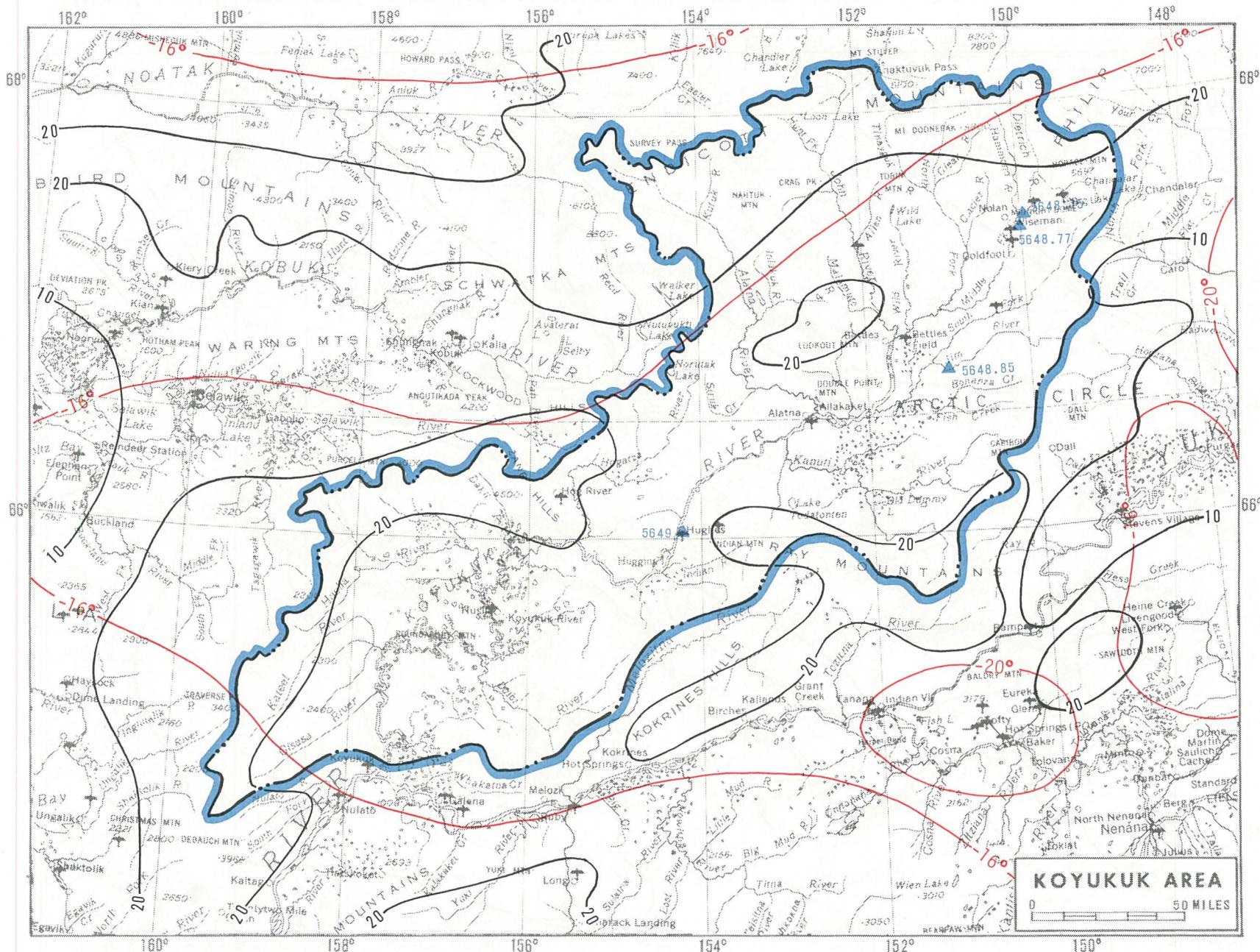


Figure 4-8.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Koyukuk area.

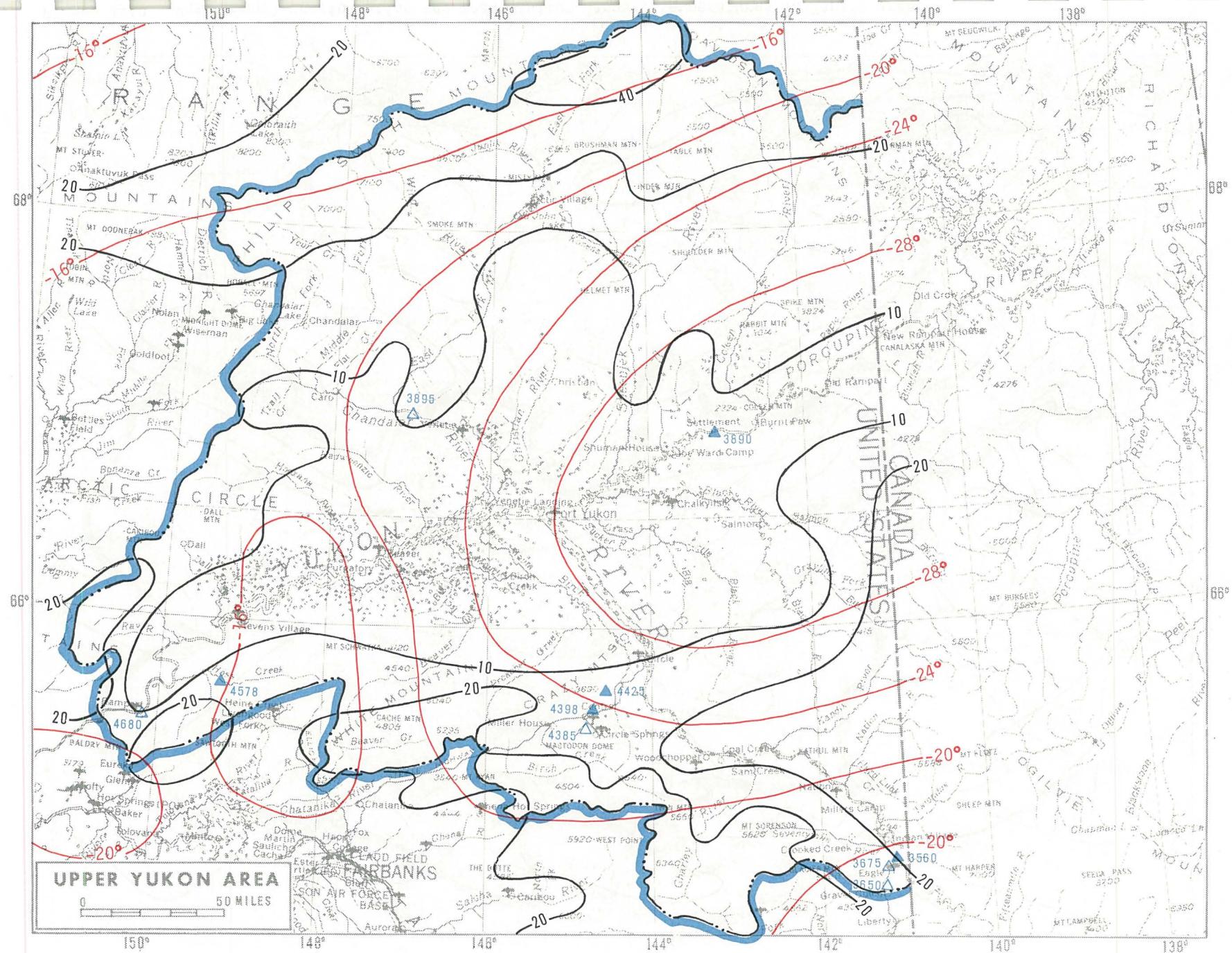


Figure 4-9.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in upper Yukon area.

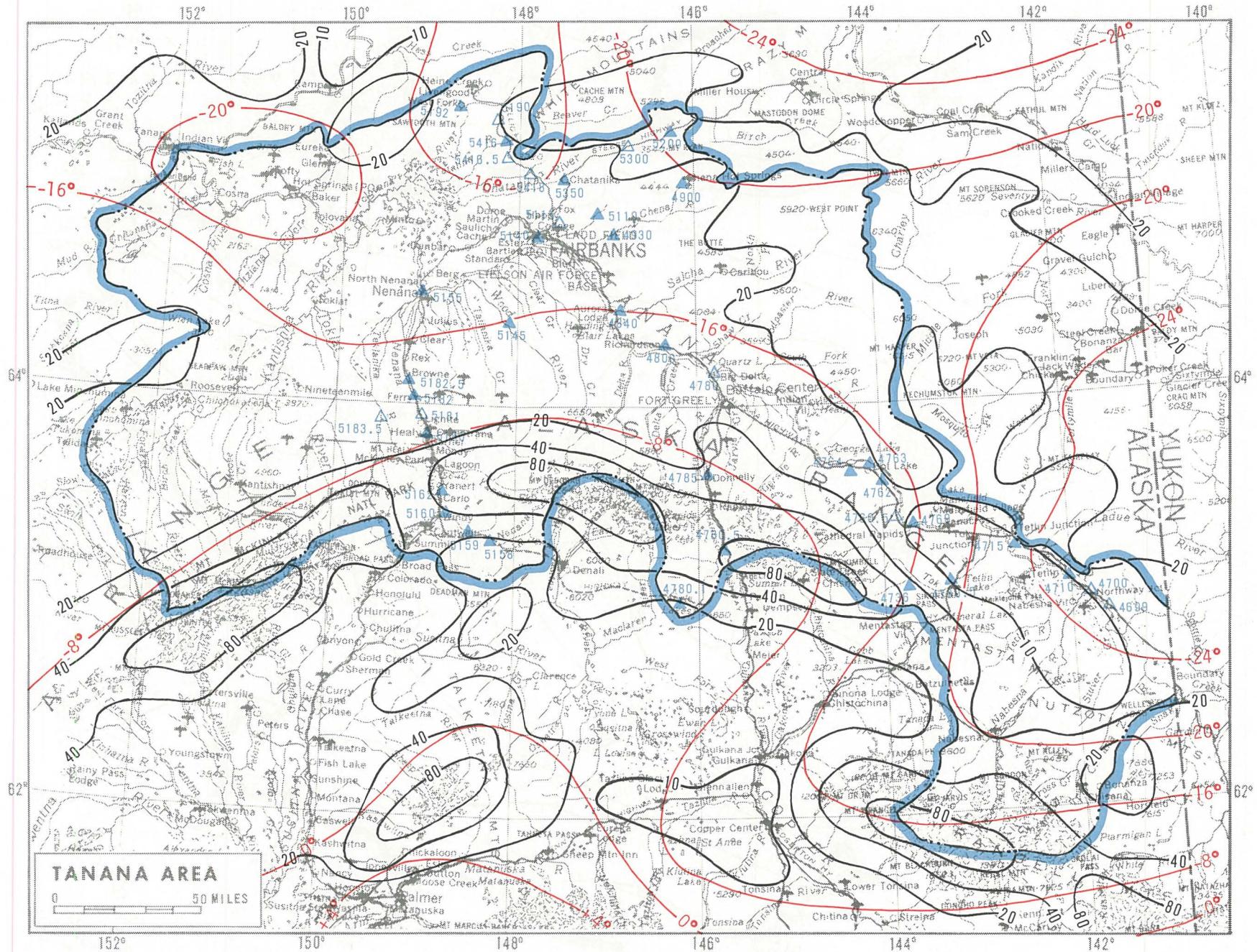


Figure 4-10. Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Tanana area.

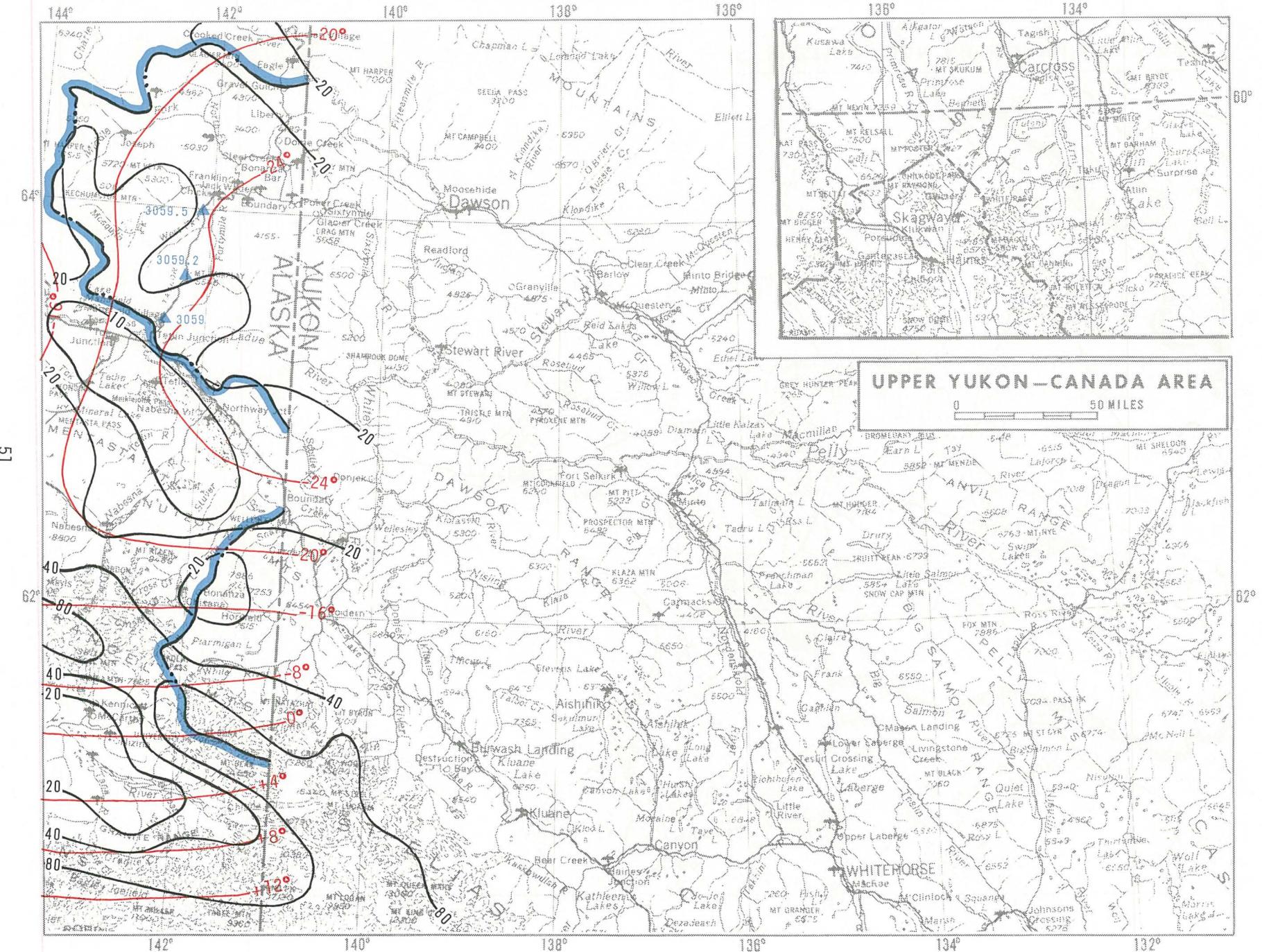


Figure 4-11.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in upper Yukon-Canada area.



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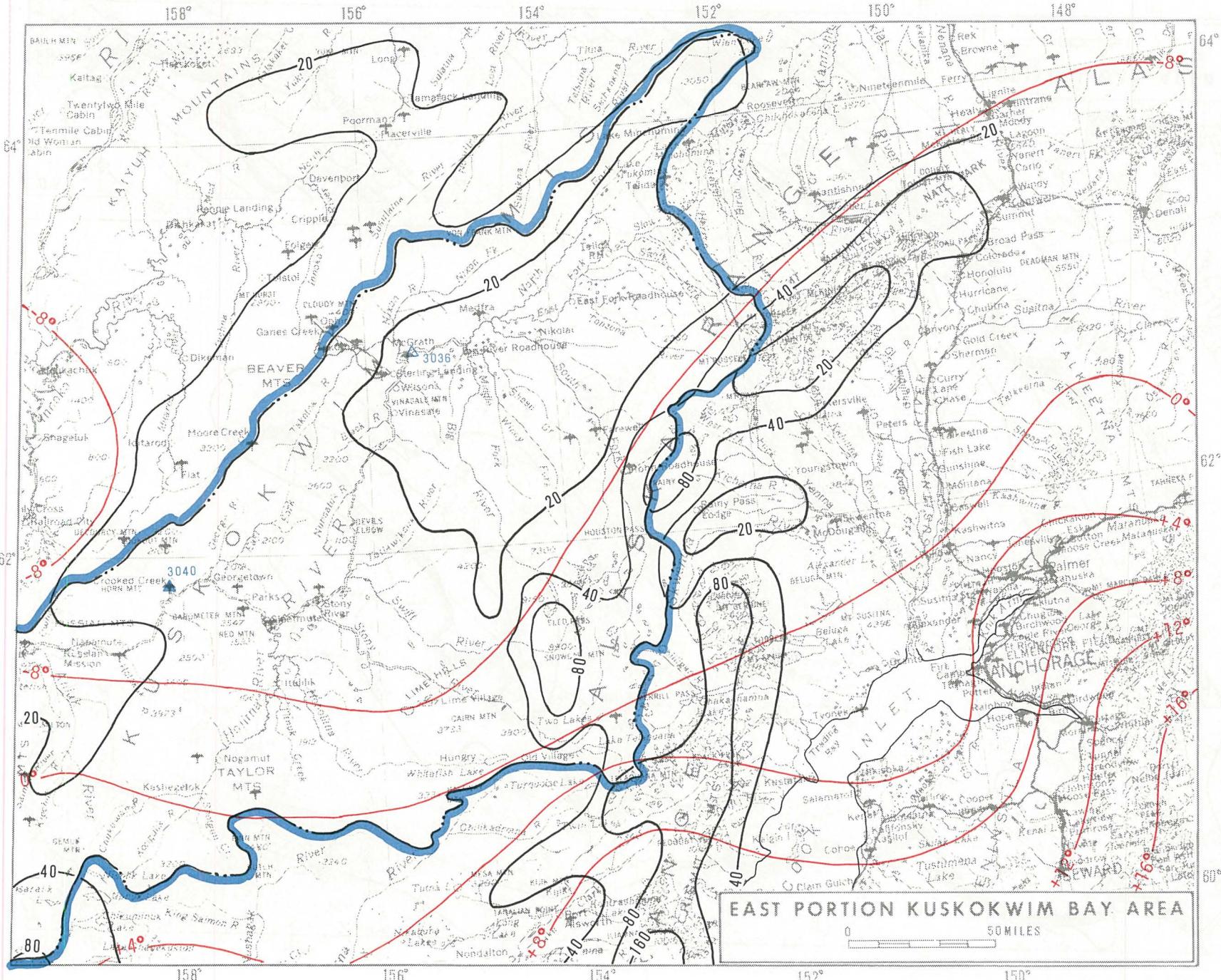


Figure 4-12b.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in east portion Kuskokwim Bay area.

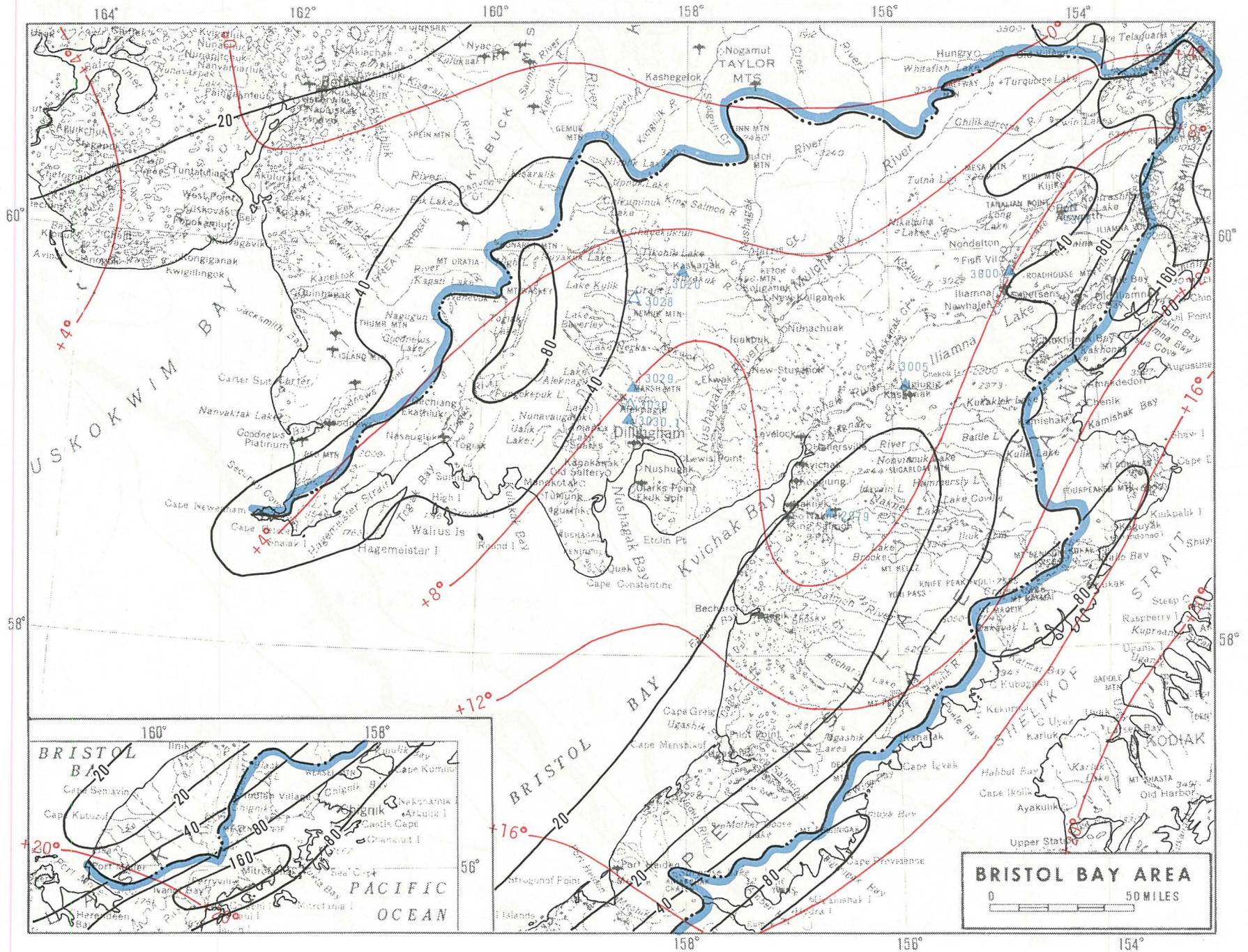


Figure 4-10 Mean annual precipitation and major rivers in Bristol Bay area

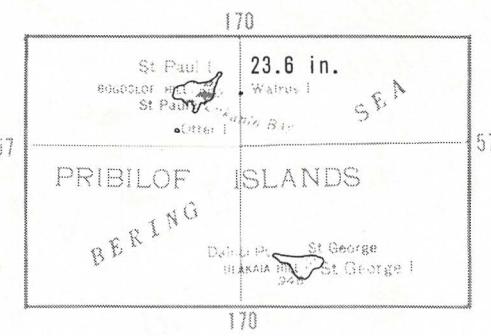
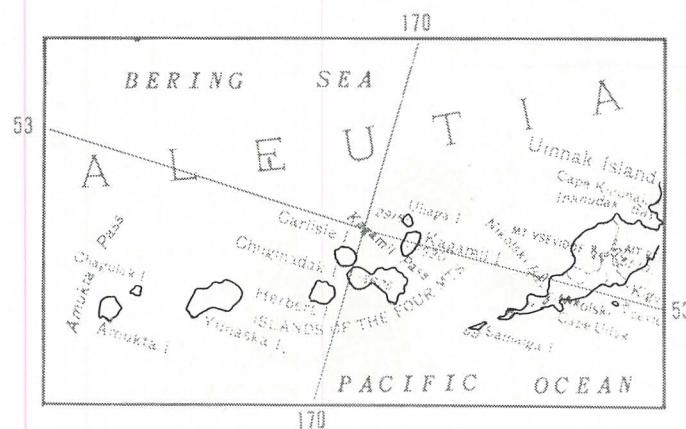
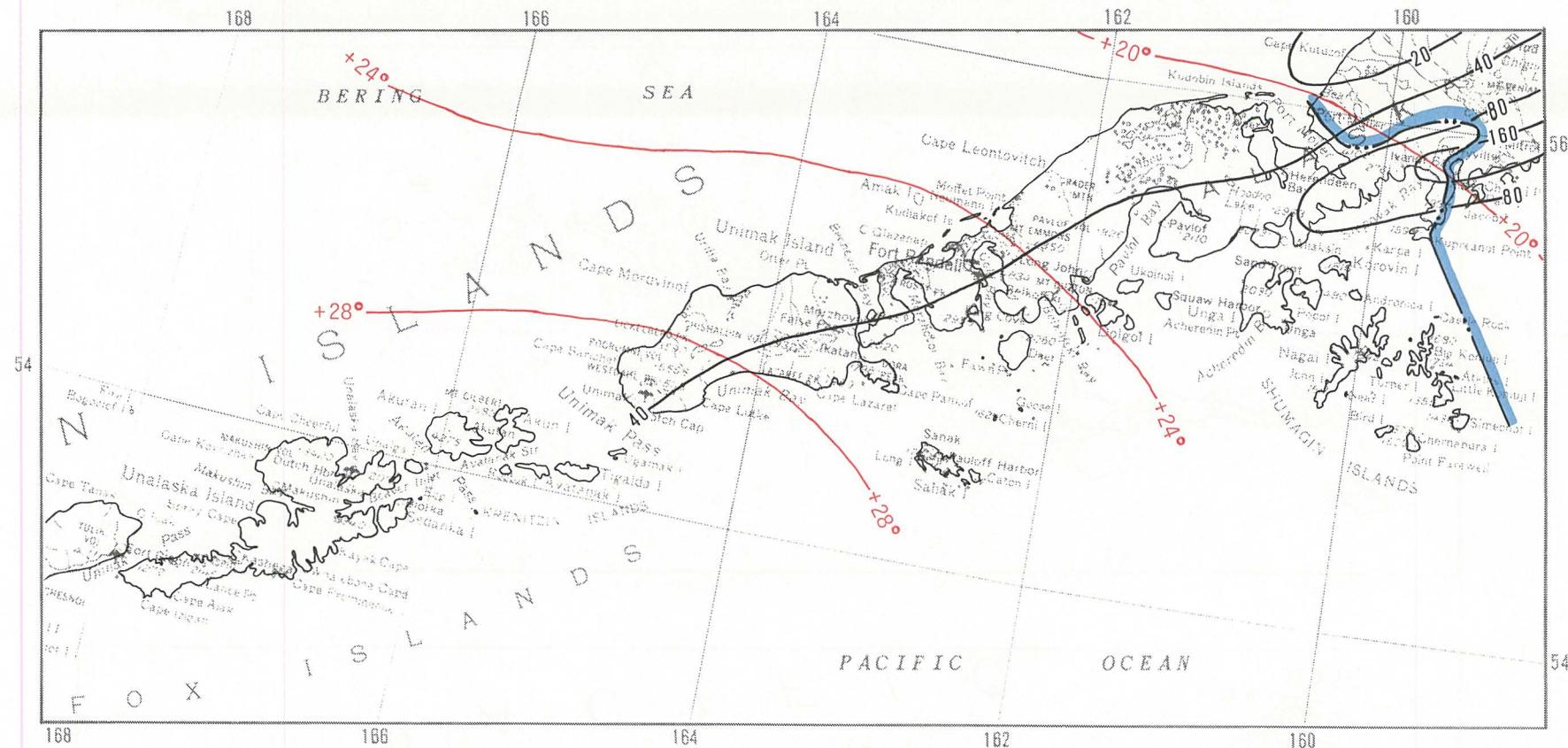


Figure 4-14a.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in east portion Aleutian area.

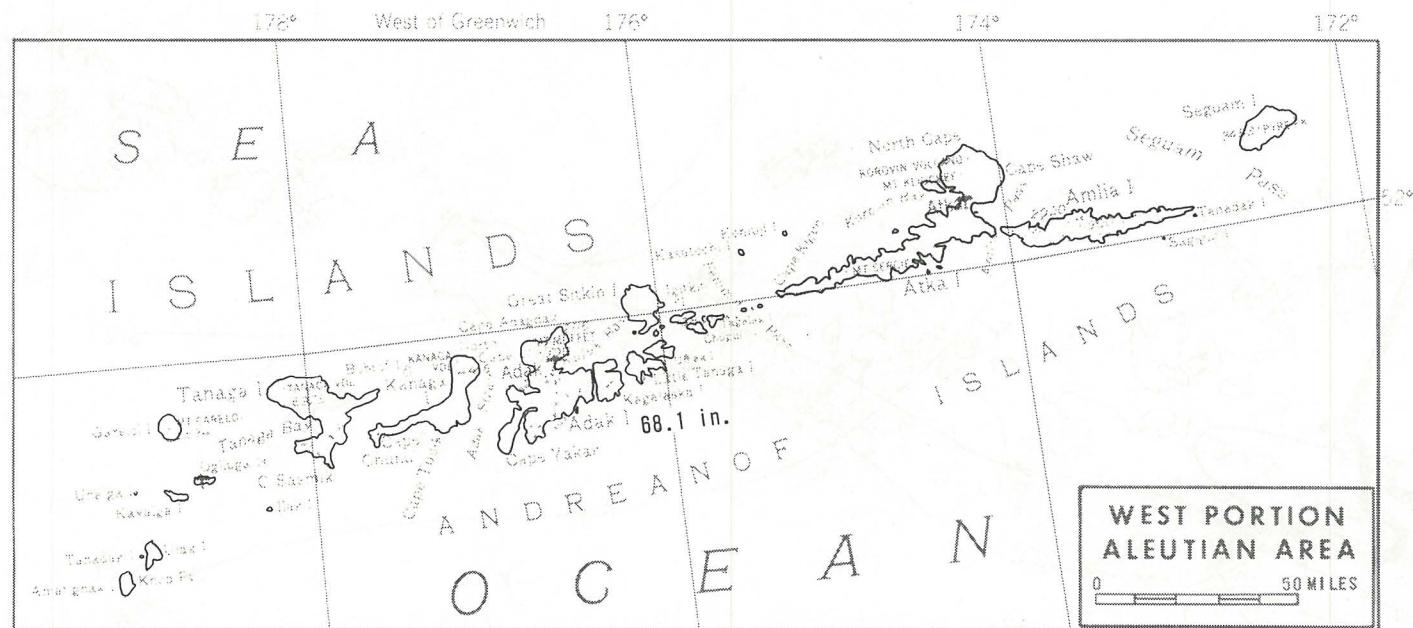
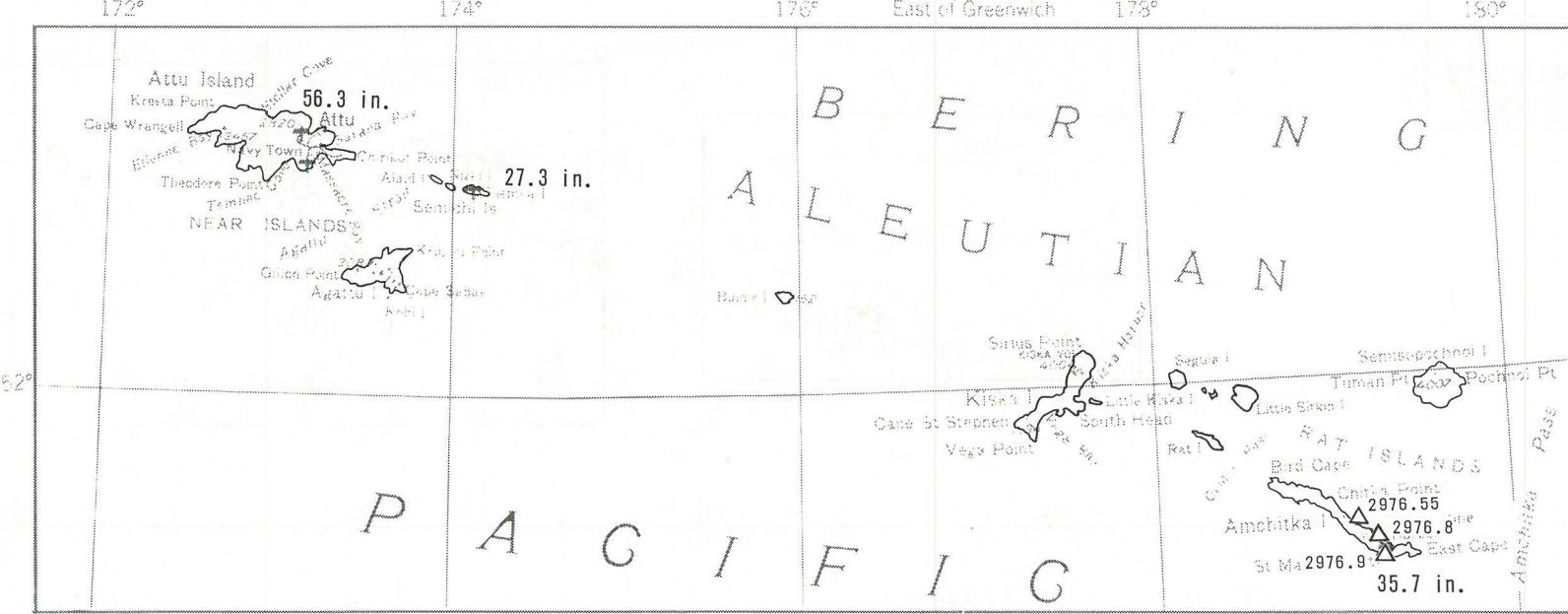


Figure 4-14b.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in west portion Aleutian area.

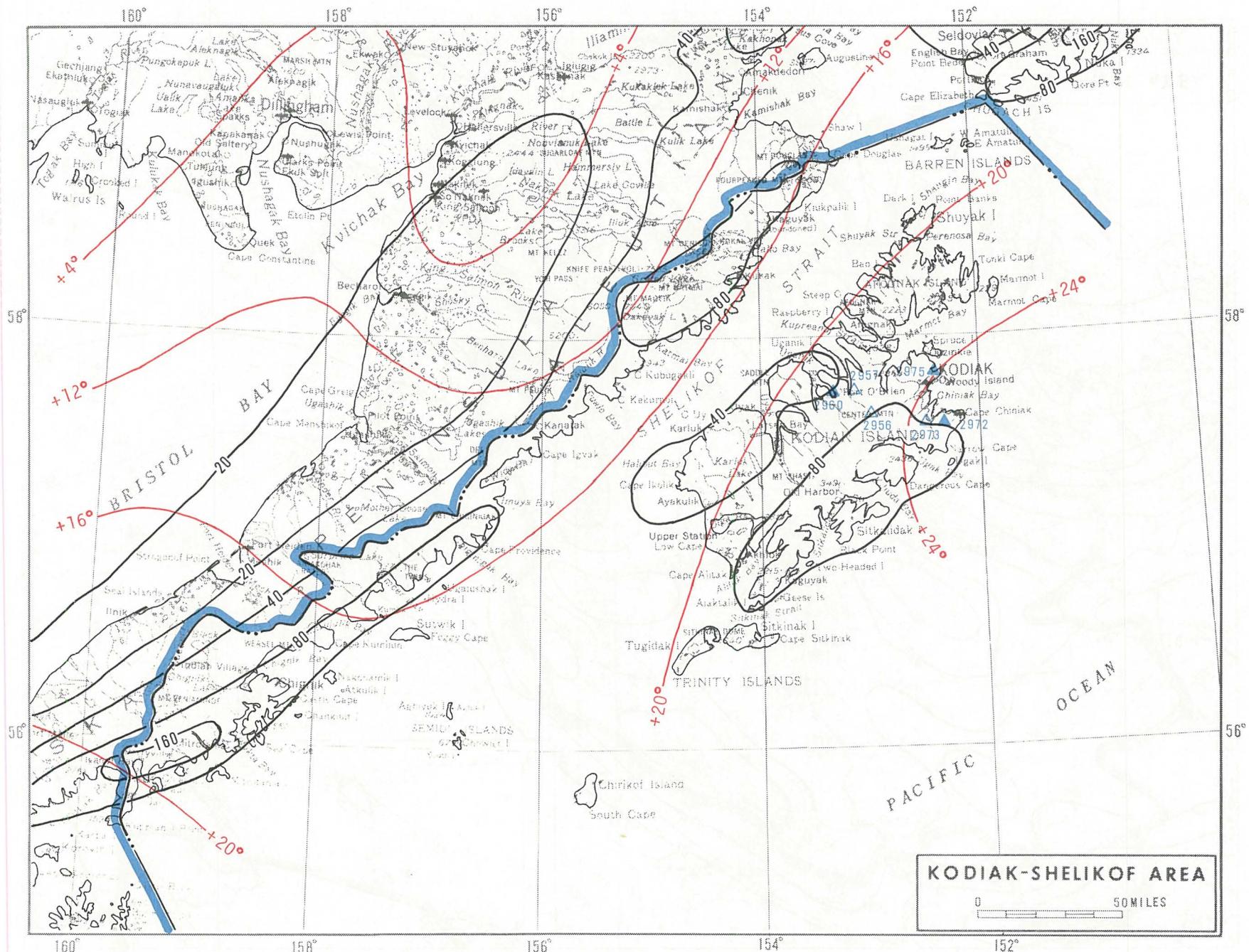


Figure 4-15.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Kodiak-Shelikof area.

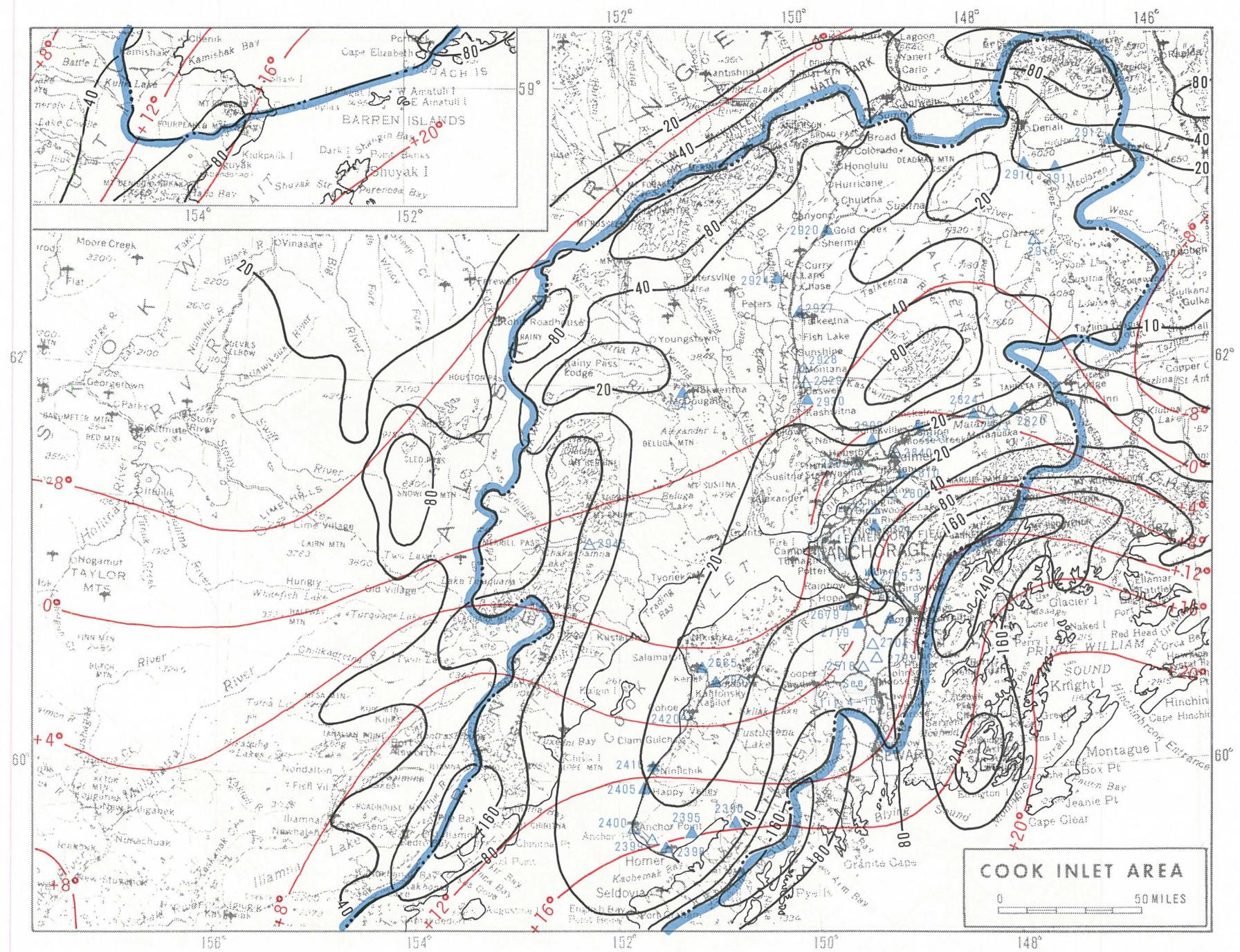


Figure 4-16.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Cook Inlet area.

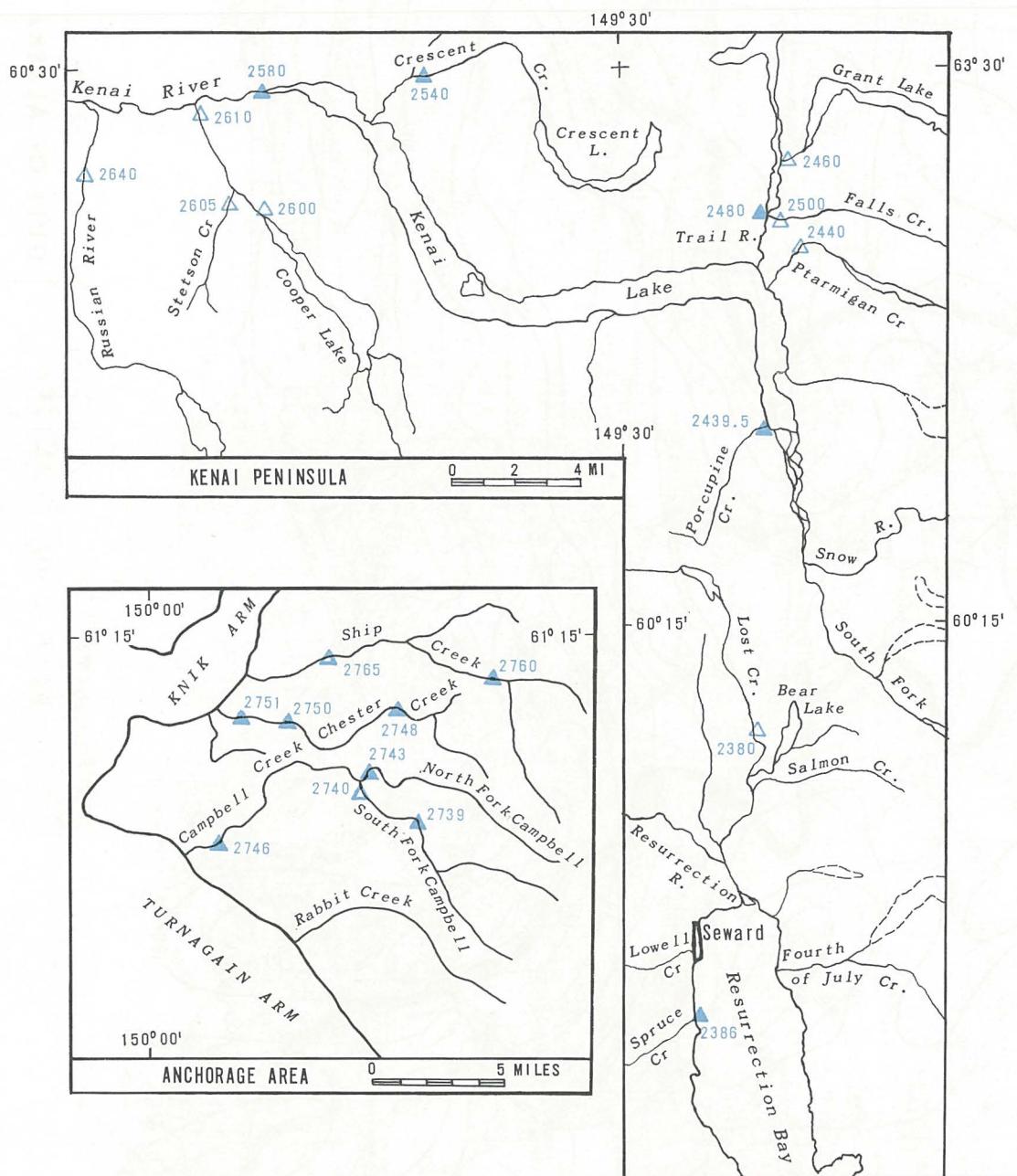


Figure 4-16a.--Details for figure 4-16.

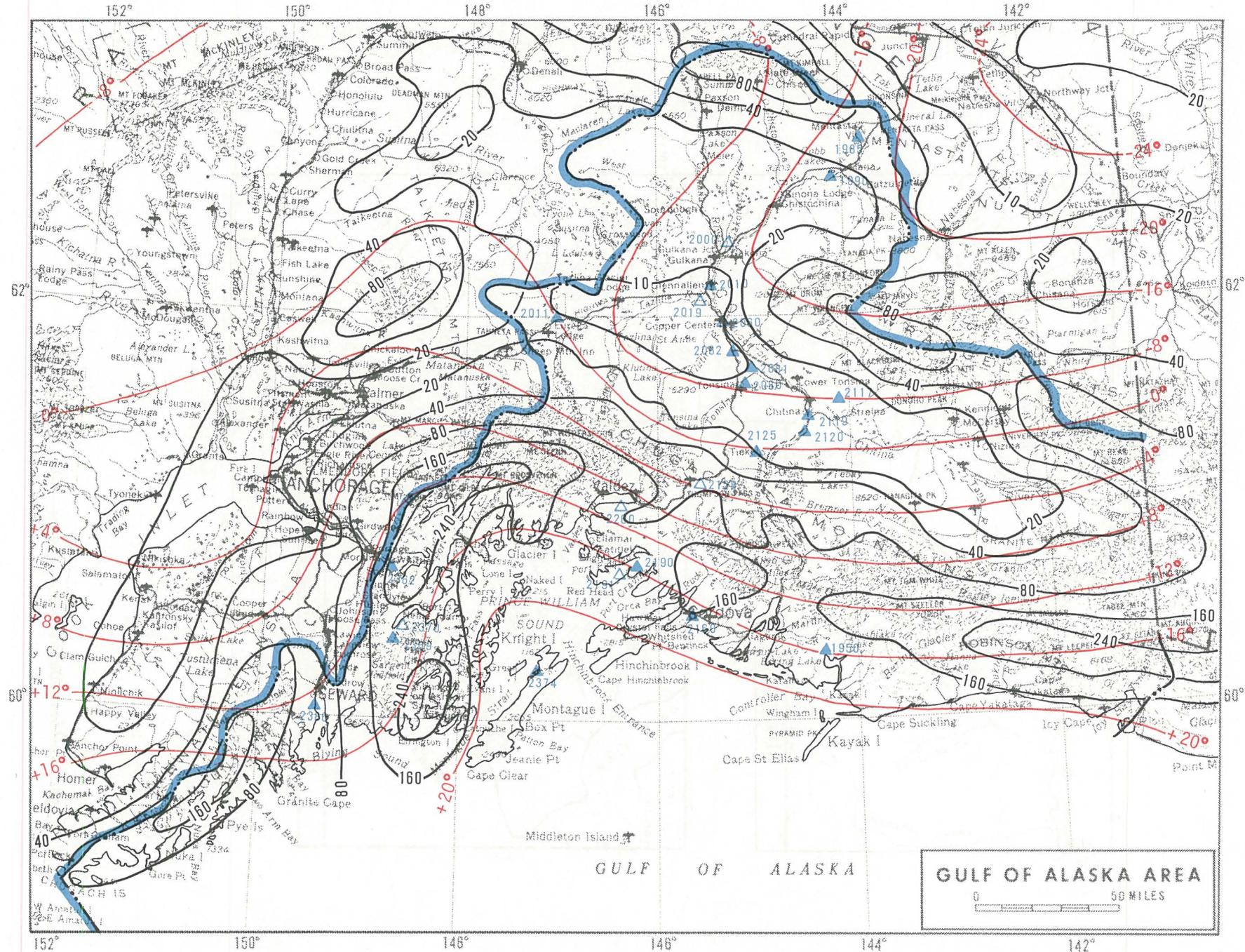


Figure 4-17 Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in Gulf of Alaska area.

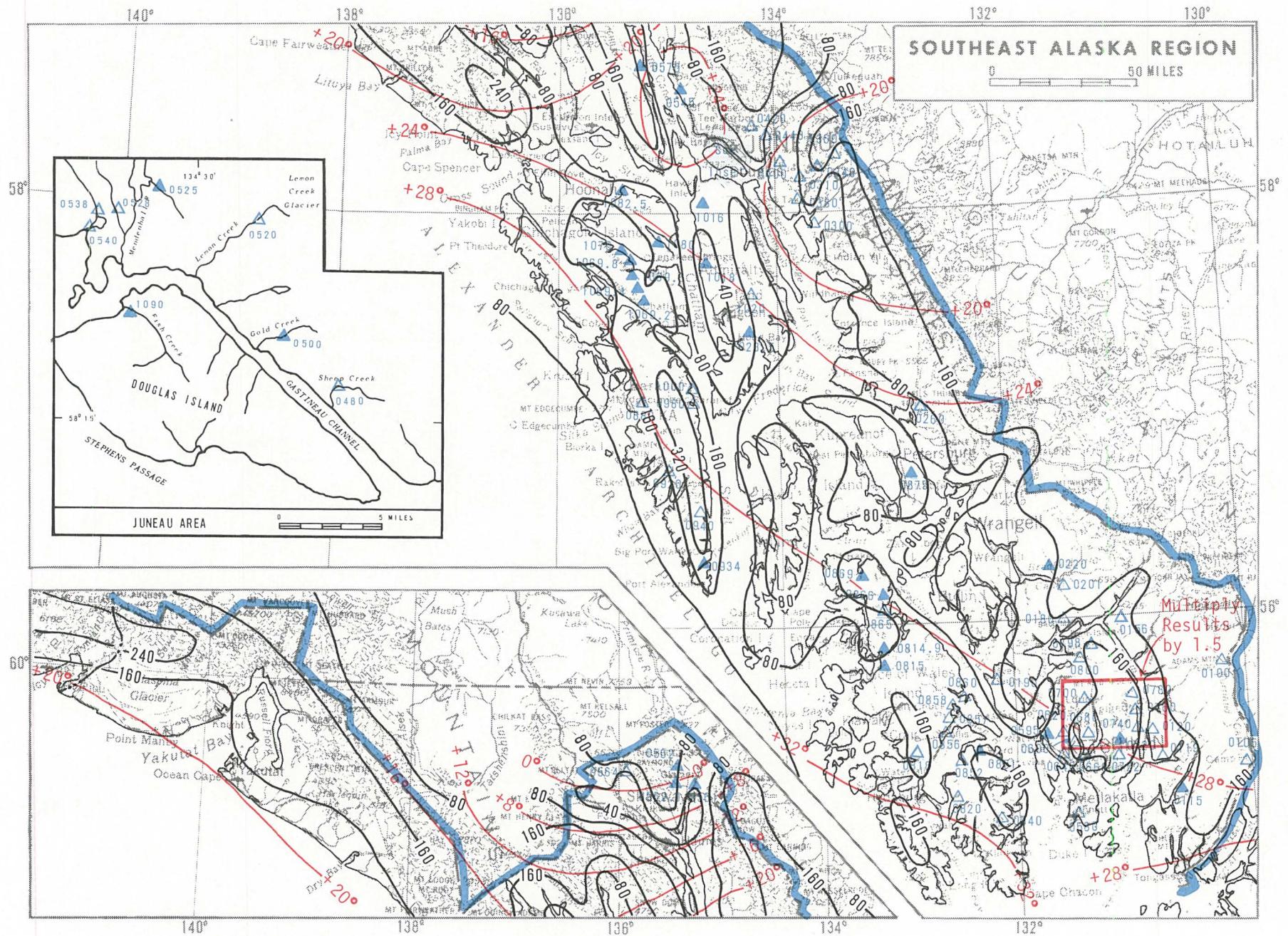


Figure 4-18.--Mean annual precipitation and mean minimum January temperatures in southeast Alaska.  
Anomalous peak discharge area outlined in red.