

Distant Source (Alaska-Aleutian Subduction Zone) Tsunami Inundation Map

North Rogue River, Oregon

Introduction

The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) has been identifying and mapping the tsunami inundation hazard along the Oregon coast since 1994. In Oregon, DOGAMI manages the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program, which has been administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) since 1995. DOGAMI's work is designed to help cities, counties, and other sites in coastal areas reduce the potential for disastrous tsunami-related consequences by understanding and mitigating the geologic hazard. Using federal funding awarded by NOAA, DOGAMI has developed a new generation of tsunami inundation maps to help residents and visitors along the entire Oregon coast prepare for the next Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) earthquake and tsunami, as well as for far-travelled or "distant" tsunamis.

The "Ring of Fire," also called the Circum-Pacific belt, is the zone of earthquake activity surrounding the Pacific Ocean. It is an arc stretching from New Zealand along the eastern edge of Asia, north across the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, and south along the coast of North and South America (Figure 1). The Ring of Fire is located at the borders of the Pacific Plate and other major tectonic plates. The Pacific Plate is colliding with and sliding underneath other plates creating subduction zones that eventually release energy in the form of an earthquake rupture. This rupture causes a vertical displacement of water that creates a tsunami. When these events occur around the Ring of Fire but not directly off the Oregon coast, they take more time to travel the Pacific Ocean and arrive onshore in Oregon (Figure 2). Distant earthquake tsunami events have affected the Oregon coast for example, offshore Alaska in 1964 and offshore Japan in March 2011.

Historically about 20 distant tsunamis have been documented by Oregon tide gauges since 1854. The most severe was generated by the 1964 M9.2 Prince William Sound earthquake in Alaska. Oregon was hit hard by the tsunami, which killed four people and caused an estimated 750,000 to 1 million dollars in damage to bridges, houses, cars, boats, and sea walls. The greatest tsunami damage in Oregon did not occur along the ocean front as one might expect, but in the estuary channels located farther inland. Of the communities affected, Seaside was inundated by a 10 foot tsunami wave and was the hardest hit. Tsunami wave heights reached 10 to 11.5 feet in the Nehalem River, 10 to 11.5 feet at Depoe Bay, 11.5 feet at Newport, 10 to 11 feet at Florence, 11 feet at Hoodport, 11 feet at Brookings, and 14 feet at Coos Bay (Witter and others, 2011).

Alaska-Aleutian M9.2 Scenario: DOGAMI modeled two distant earthquake and tsunami scenarios involving M9.2 earthquakes originating near the Gulf of Alaska. The first scenario attempts to replicate the 1964 Prince William Sound event, and the second scenario represents a hypothetical maximum event. This maximum event is the same model used by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in their 2004 tsunami hazard assessment of Seaside (USGS 2006). This model uses extreme fault model parameters that result in maximum seafloor uplift nearly twice as large as in the 1964 earthquake. The selected source location on the Aleutian chain of islands also shows higher energy directed toward the Oregon coast than other Alaska source locations. For these reasons the hypothetical Alaska Maximum scenario is selected as the worst case distant tsunami scenario for Oregon. Detailed information on fault geometries, subsidence, computer models, and the methodology used to create the tsunami scenarios presented on this map can be found in DOGAMI Special Paper 43 (Witter and others, 2011).

Map Explanation

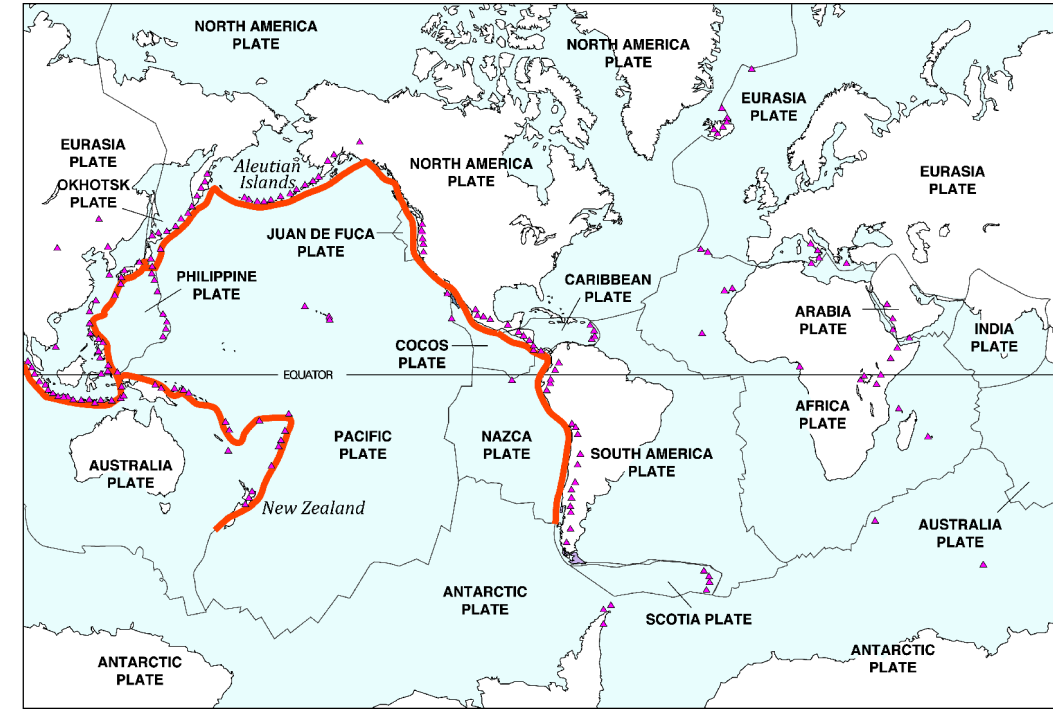
This tsunami inundation map displays the output of computer models representing the two selected tsunami scenarios: Alaska M9.2 (1964) and the Alaska Maximum. All tsunami simulations were run assuming that prevailing tides was static (no flow) and equal to Mean Higher High Water (MHHW) tide. MHHW is defined as the average height of the higher high tides observed over an 18-year period at the Port of Deft tide gauge. The map legend depicts the respective amounts of inundation and the earthquake magnitude for those two scenarios. Figure 3 shows the cumulative number of buildings inundated within the map area.

The computer simulation model output is provided to DOGAMI as millions of points with values that indicate whether the location of each point is wet or dry. These points are converted to wet and dry contour lines that form the extent of inundation. The transition area between the wet and dry contour lines is termed the Wet/Dry Zone, which equates to the amount of error in the model when determining the maximum inundation for each scenario. Only the Alaska Maximum Wet/Dry Zone is shown on this map.

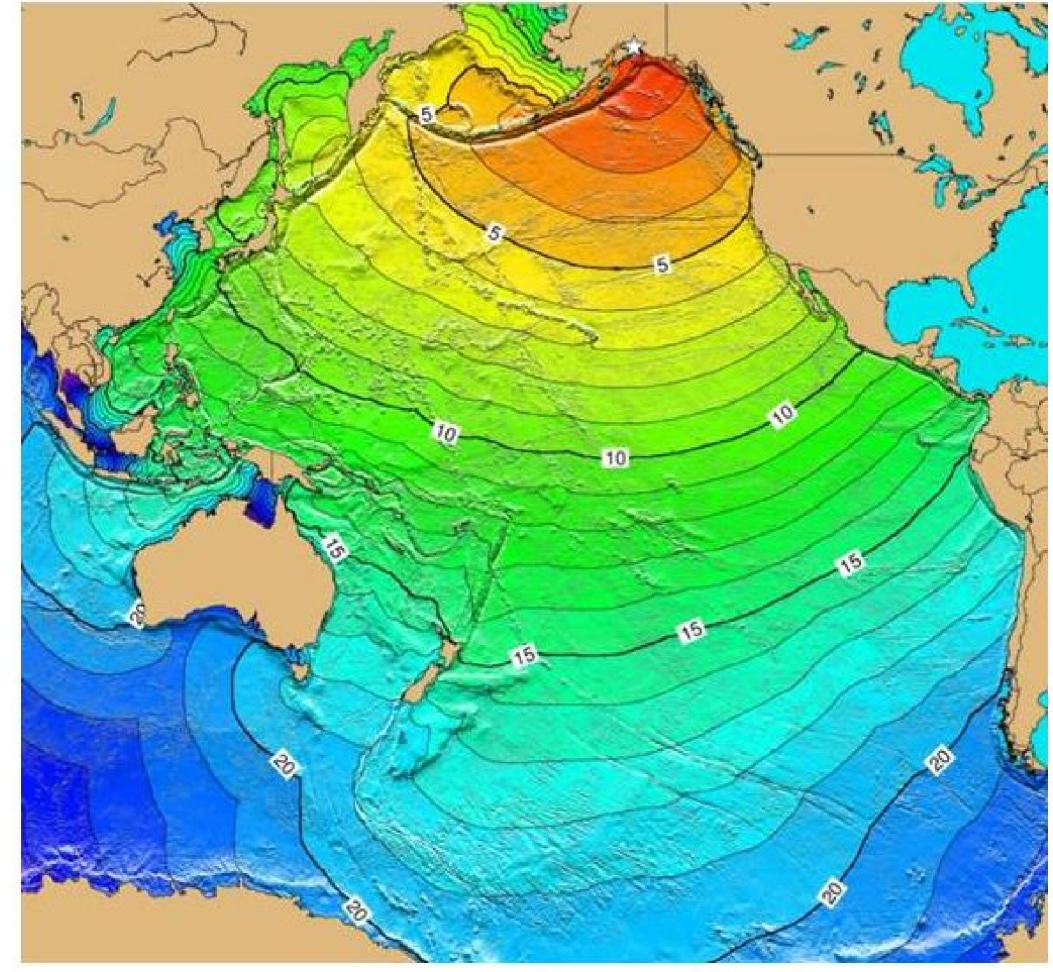
This map also shows the regulatory tsunami inundation line (Oregon Revised Statutes 455.446 and 455.447, commonly known as the Senate Bill 379 line. Senate Bill 379 (1995) instructed DOGAMI to establish the area of expected tsunami inundation based on scientific evidence and tsunami modeling in order to prohibit the construction of new essential and special occupancy structures in this tsunami inundation zone (Prest, 1995).

Time Series Graphs and Water Elevation Profiles: In addition to the tsunami scenarios, the computer model produces time series data for "gauged" locations in the area. These points are simulated gauge stations that record the time, in seconds, of the tsunami wave arrival and the wave height observed. It is especially noteworthy that the greatest wave height and velocity observed are not necessarily associated with the first tsunami wave to arrive onshore. Therefore, consumers should not assume that the tsunami event is over until the proper authorities have sounded the all-clear at the end of the evacuation. Figure 4 depicts the tsunami waves as they arrive at a simulated gauge station. Figure 5 depicts the overall wave height and inundation extent for the two scenarios at the profile locations shown on this map.

Ring of Fire



Prince William Sound 1964 M9.2 Earthquake and Tsunami Travel Time Map



Buildings within Tsunami Inundation Zones

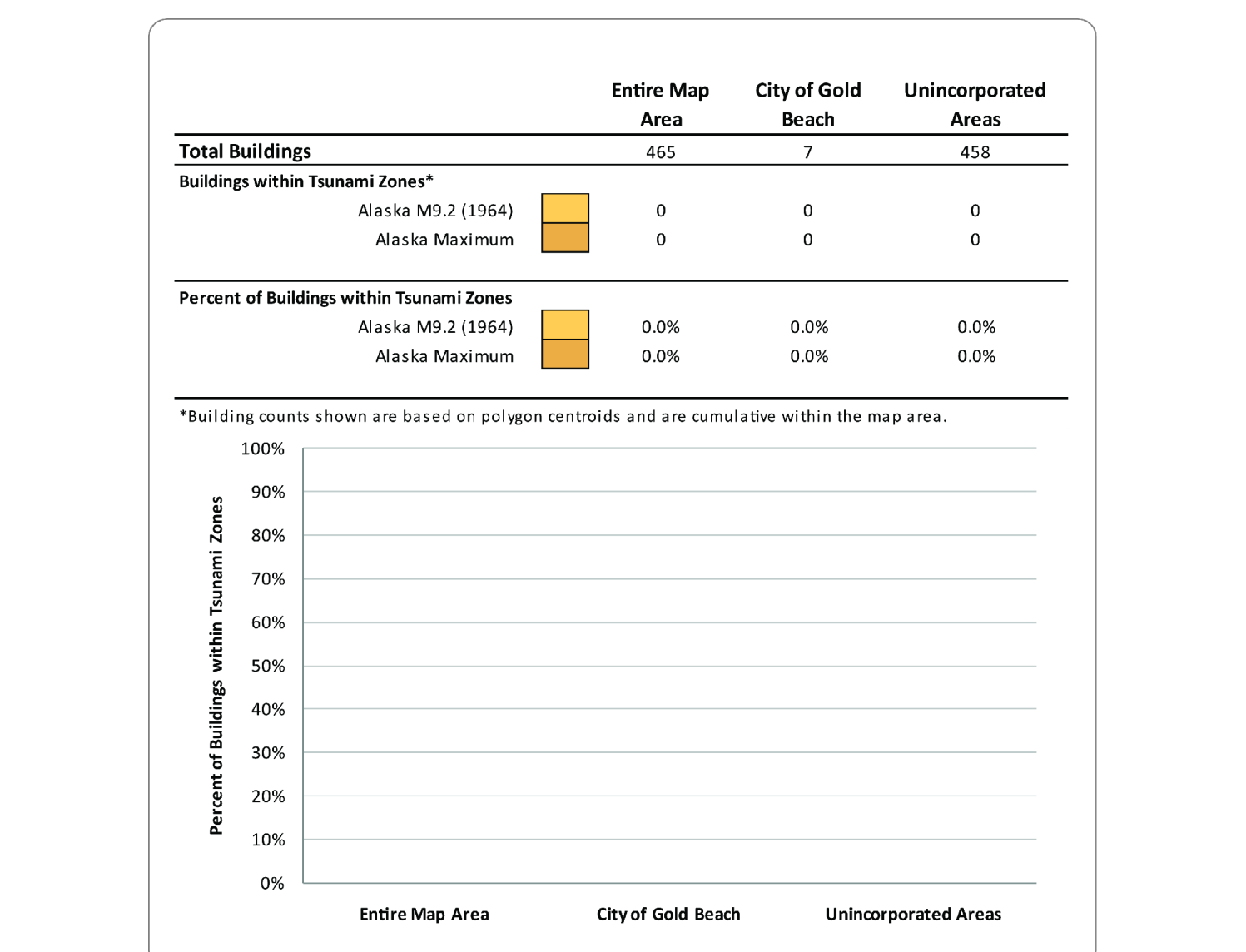
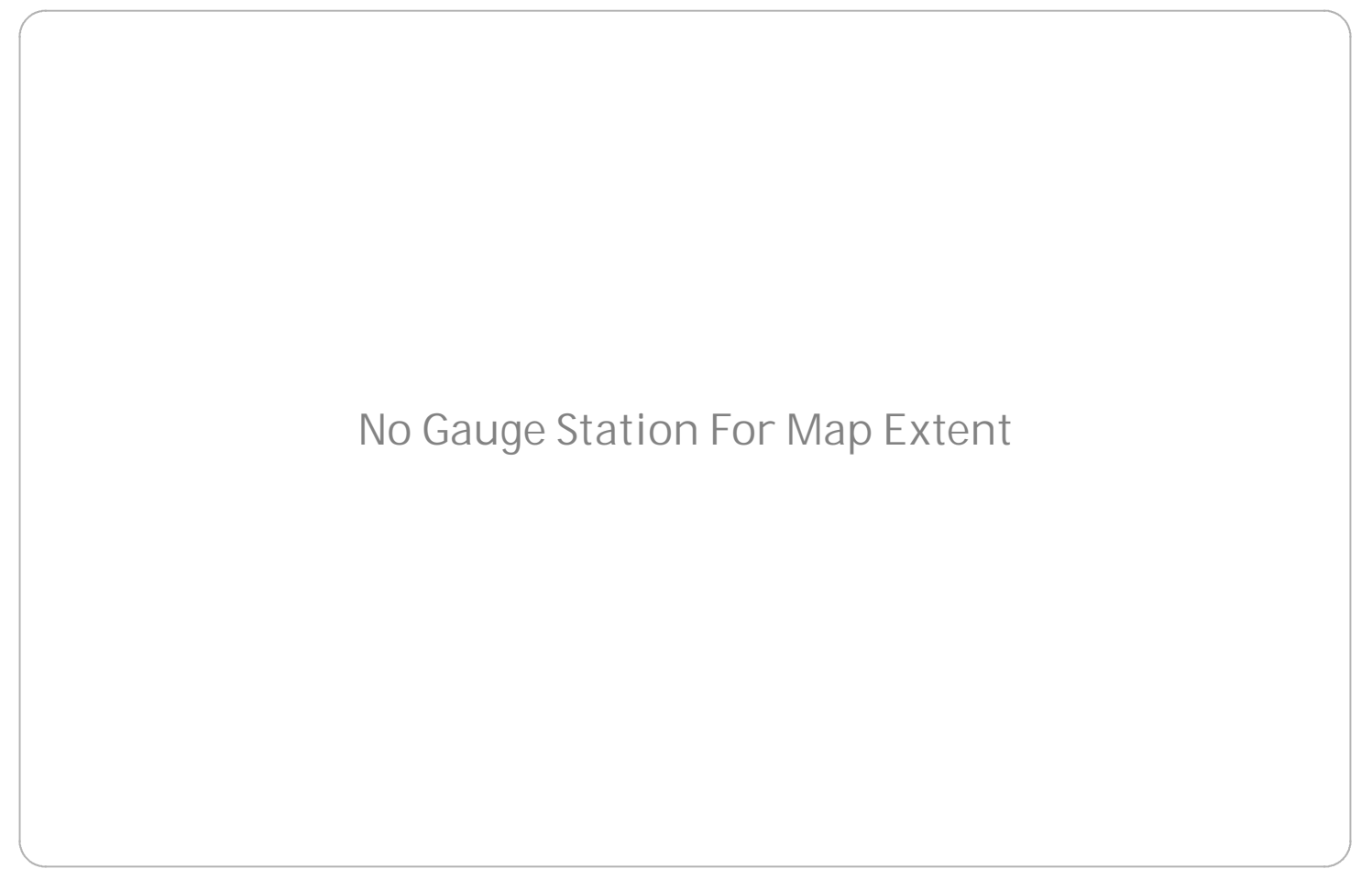


Figure 3: The table and chart show the number of buildings inundated for the Alaska M9.2 (1964) and the Alaska Maximum tsunami scenarios for cities and unincorporated portions of the map.

Estimated Tsunami Wave Height through Time for Simulated Gauge Station



Maximum Wave Elevation Profiles

