

# USGS: Moab watershed 30-40% smaller than previously reported

[Carter Pape](#) Aug. 16, 2019



*Photo courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey*

A long-awaited study from the U.S. Geological Survey shows that the availability of groundwater in the Moab valley is significantly less than a study from 1971—the most recent study investigating the size of the area’s watershed.

A press release accompanying the report’s release said that the new estimates for the amount of water entering and leaving the Moab valley watershed (excluding roughly 1,000 acre-feet to and from the Grandstaff and Ice Box Canyons watershed areas) is 13,000 to 15,000 acre-feet per year.

The previous estimate for that same area was 22,000 acre-feet per year.

According to the press release, the new estimate is based on the outflow of groundwater from local aquifers, which “provides a more robust assessment of how much water is in an aquifer system than recharge measurements.”

“These findings will be useful to local and state water managers in

evaluating how much additional development can be sustained in the Moab area with the groundwater available," said lead author and Geological Survey scientist Melissa Masbruch. "This information can also help decision-makers make informed choices as they develop a future groundwater management plan."

The Times-Independent will have in-depth reporting on the new study in its Thursday edition, Aug. 22, including reaction from local, state and federal officials.

[The full report and accompanying exhibits are available on the Geological Survey's website.](#)

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