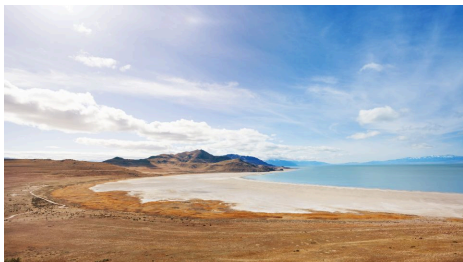
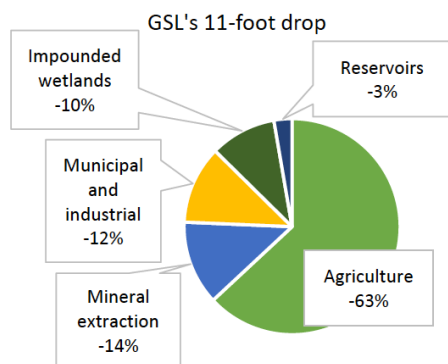


Agriculture Water Use and Economic Value in the Great Salt Lake Basin Quickguide

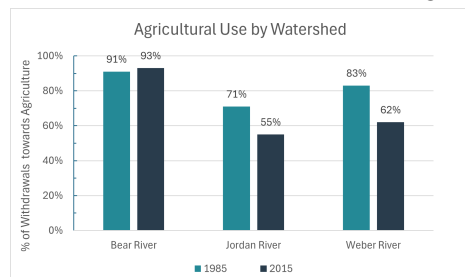


The Great Salt Lake (GSL) has shrunk by 11 feet in elevation and lost 50% of its surface area—primarily due to human water use. Agriculture accounts for 63% of this long-term loss, with additional impacts from mineral, municipal, and industrial



uses.

From 1985 to 2015, Utah's agricultural irrigation withdrawals in the GSL Basin fell by 30% (about 588,000 acre-feet), while about 52,000 acres of irrigated land were lost—mostly to urban growth. Despite this, agriculture remains the largest water user in some watersheds. In 2015, 93% of Bear River, 62% of Weber, and 55% of Jordan River withdrawals went to agriculture.



Economically, irrigated agriculture is vital. In 2022, farm cash receipts in the basin totaled nearly \$881 million, with input spending estimated around \$760 million. Combined with food processing, the sector contributes over \$1.6 billion annually to Utah's economy. The GSL itself adds another \$1.9 billion per year through ecosystem and industrial services.

Definitions

Watershed:

An area where all water drains to the same place.

Consumptive Use:

Water that's used up and doesn't return, like crop evaporation.

Acre-Foot:

Enough water to cover 1 acre of land 1 foot deep (about **326,000 gallons**).

Withdrawal:

Water taken from rivers or reservoirs

Farm Cash Receipts:

Money farmers earn from selling crops or livestock.

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References

- [View Full Factsheet Here](#)

Authors

Matthew Reyes, Cody Zesiger, Burdette Barker, Sarah Null, Earl Creech, Matt Yost, Ryan Larsen, and JoshDallin
 Utah State University Extension, June 2025