

## **Methodology Changed as a Result of 2015 Audit**

The Utah Division of Water Resources has analyzed municipal and industrial (M&I) water use data every five years since 1990; however, the 2015 dataset marks a significant methodologic and data accuracy milestone.

The updated and improved methodology is based on recommendations from a [2015 Legislative Audit](#), [2017 Follow-up Audit](#), and [Third-Party Review](#) of the division's processes. All recommendations necessary for this data release have been implemented. Changes in recommended secondary water use estimate inputs, as well as the transfer of second homes from the commercial category to the residential category, are examples of updates that impact categorical or total use estimates.

These changes make comparing the 2015 numbers to past water use data problematic due to the significant methodology differences. As a result, the division is using the 2015 data as the new baseline for comparison and planning moving forward.

Likewise, comparisons from region to region within Utah are problematic due to differences in climate, the number of vacation homes and other factors. Comparisons between Utah's water use numbers and data from other states have little value given there is no nationally consistent methodology standard for analyzing and reporting water use numbers.

It should be noted that administrative processes were changed in 2016 to ensure community water system data corrections are updated in the Utah Division of Water Rights' database and website; however, these updated processes did not occur for the 2015 data. As a result, the data will often differ from what is reflected on the Utah Division of Water Rights' website. That said, the 2015 Division of Water Resources dataset underwent both a legislative auditor and third party review, and the Division of Water Resources is confident it is reflective of regional water use and useful for planning purposes.

The Division of Water Rights continues to work with water systems to improve water use data reporting. Since 2016, the Division of Water Resources has been using data directly from the Division of Water Rights database. However, water systems work with the Division of Water Rights to correct historic data. Corrections to historic data are not reflected in the Division of Water Resources reports and posted datasets.

*updated 3/2021*

