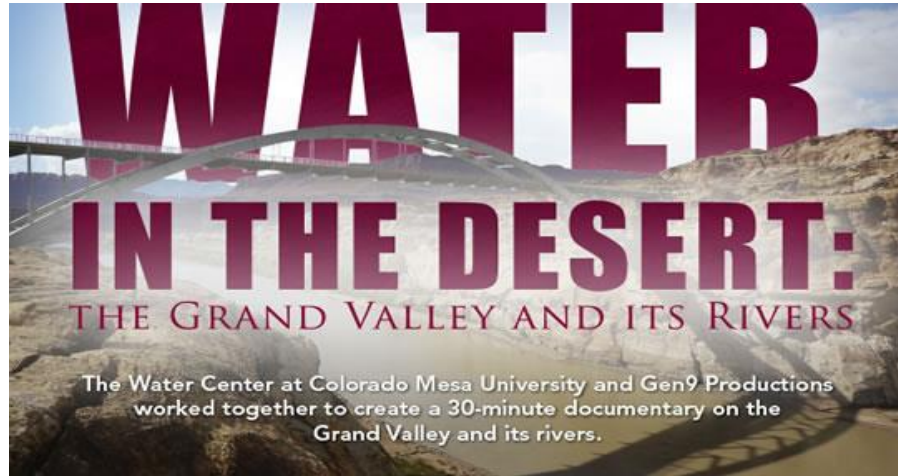


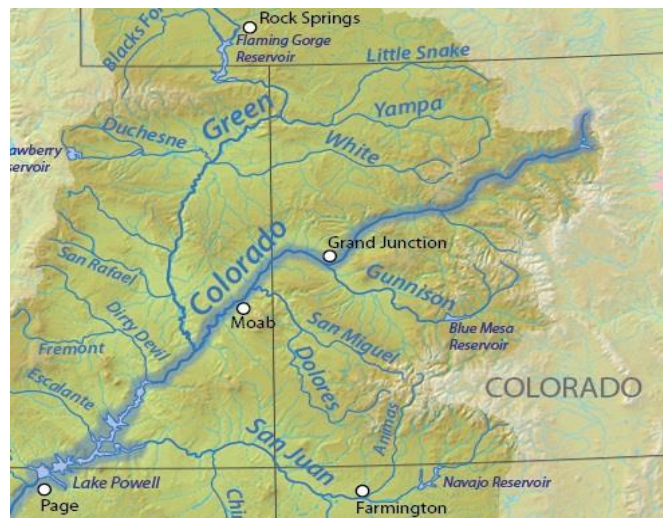
A Review of “Water in the Desert: The Grand Valley and Its Rivers”

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Documentary picture from the Colorado Mesa University's Water Center website.

Colorado Mesa University's Water Science Center and Gen9 Productions have created a compelling media piece for educating the general public about water use in the Grand Valley. The 30-minute film, “Water in the Desert: The Grand Valley and Its Rivers”, focuses on the Grand Valley, a densely-populated river valley approximately 30 miles (48 km) long located in Colorado and Utah. The Grand Valley is home to the Colorado and Gunnison River systems. “Water in the Desert” is a substantive documentary that delves into the current water management issues involved with allocation of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers' finite resources. The film, according to its synopsis, “explores the community's relationship to its water resources through the history of water development, current usage and future challenges as it applies not only locally, but also in a regional context.” Placing importance on both the then and now, this documentary hits all of these major points in a direct and succinct manner.



Colorado and Gunnison Rivers in Utah and Colorado. Modified from an image in the U.S.G.S. The National Map database.

Key takeaway messages from the documentary include significant concepts, such as: history of water use in the area; how the water is distributed; the value of recreation; natural ecosystems and endangered species; environmental legislation that has improved water quality; and climate change impacting the quantity of water. The film communicates each subject effectively, minimizing jargon, and involving speakers from different occupations and backgrounds. The filmmakers managed the available time neatly, with each topic (*Water Legacy*, *Water Use*, and *Water Future*) addressed in 10-minute segments. The documentary is visually rich, with outstanding cinematography incorporating beautiful landscapes, gorgeous water footage, and relevant historical photographs.



Recreation on a river in the Grand Valley. Footage from “Water in the Desert” documentary.

As an outreach piece, “Water in the Desert” could profit from minor improvements to its storytelling style. The documentary suffers from a monotone narrator, which may cause bored audience members to miss important information provided during the first two-thirds of the film. The documentary would have also benefited from more diverse social perspectives, rather than largely using Caucasian speakers in scientific and agricultural fields. While watching the documentary, I wondered, “How did Native Americans use Grand Valley rivers before Western settlers migrated into the area? How do these water allocation issues affect Native Americans and impact their Reservations resources?” Additionally, the documentary focused primarily on water use challenges and problems, whereas emphasizing solutions or calling community members to action would allow the film to end on a more positive, constructive note.

Overall, however, “Water in the Desert” is a great teaching tool within a brief half hour, and creates a stepping stone for pertinent dialogue relating to the Grand Valley and its surrounding rivers. The documentary would be best utilized in middle school to high school classroom settings, or broadcasted as a public news or radio segment. Watch the documentary [here](#) on Colorado Mesa University's Water Center website.