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A toast to NASA's latest discovery: ice on the moon

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At NASA's press conference Friday, researchers could barely contain themselves. They'd struck water on the moon, they announced — most likely, lots of it!

Last month, the space agency intentionally crashed a rocket into a dark, cold spot near the moon's south pole, just to see if the impact might kick up interesting dust. And sure enough, it did: The mile-high cloud included roughly 25 gallons of water molecules, believed to be from ice long buried beneath the lunar surface.

"This is not your father's moon," exulted scientist Greg Delory. "Rather than a dead and unchanging world, it could in fact be a

very dynamic and interesting one."

For planetary scientists, of course, words like "dynamic" and "interesting" apply to things far slower-moving than Jon and Kate Gosselin's relationship or Sarah Palin's career. We're not talking about a little boy believed to be adrift in a wacko homemade weather balloon; we're talking about ice that's been around for eons and — except when we crash things into it — isn't going anywhere.

Still, for proponents of sending humans back to the moon, the discovery counts as high drama. As the Obama administration ponders whether manned spaceflight is worth \$3 billion a year, the possibility of water on the moon suddenly makes a self-sustaining colony seem possible.



In other words, maybe next time we wouldn't just go back to the moon. Maybe we'd stay.

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