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## Water on moon: Discovery intrigues scientists over possibility of life

By John Johnson Jr.  
Tribune Newspapers  
November 14, 2009

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Scientists have found "significant" amounts of water in a crater at the moon's south pole, a major discovery that will dramatically revise the characterization of the moon as a dead world and probably make it a more attractive destination for human space missions.

"The moon is alive," declared Anthony Colaprete, the chief scientist for the Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite mission.

That mission, which on Oct. 9 used a rocket to punch a hole about 100 feet across in the moon's surface, then measured about 25 gallons of water in the form of vapor and ice. It could be evidence there is enough water in permanently shaded craters at the poles for future astronauts to live off the land.

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration** plans -- under review by the Obama administration -- call for a return to the moon at the end of the next decade and construction of a lunar base where astronauts could live and work for months at a time. The presence of large quantities of water would make that plan more practical, because water could be used for drinking, to produce oxygen for breathing and even to make rocket fuel.

A resource-rich moon also could serve as a low-gravity launching pad for missions to elsewhere in the solar system.

"This is painting a surprising new picture of the moon. This is not your father's moon," said Greg Delory, a space scientist at the **University of California, Berkeley**. He referred to the fact that, after the Apollo missions of the 1960s and '70s, the

moon was regarded as a dead place with little to offer future explorers.

"What's really exciting is we've only hit one spot," said Peter Schultz, a geology professor at **Brown University** and a co-investigator on the mission. "It's kind of like when you're drilling for oil. Once you find it in one place, there's a greater chance you'll find more nearby."

The \$79 million lunar crater mission was launched in June to try to uncover the source of large quantities of hydrogen that had been measured by other spacecraft in lunar craters at the poles.

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*Guzelvis (11/14/2009, 10:08 AM)*

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