

Coalbed methane - a new energy source for Nova Scotia?

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Coalbed methane, or more properly “coal gas” as it is referenced under the legislation which governs its activity, may finally have its day as a new resource for the province of Nova Scotia. Recent initiatives by both the government and the private sector have set the stage for current and future development activities for this clean energy resource.

Ever since commercial coal mining began in this province in 1720, coalbed methane has long been the bane of coal miners. Fire damp or “that damn gas” has plagued mining efforts for centuries. Driven by a need for mining safety and the realization that the methane could be a readily available cheap energy source, technology and techniques have evolved after some 15 years of development activity principally in the United States.

Response to provincial government requests for proposals has resulted in two of the three major coal basins of the province being held by industry for exploratory and development work. Private sector drilling this past year and work planned for next several years will continue the evaluation efforts. The government has funded several research projects aimed at enhancing the understanding and improving the data base for coalbed methane efforts. The federal government as well has undertaken studies relating to the methane potential of the region. In a province where some 67% of its energy needs are met by imported foreign crude oil, development of an indigenous source of clean burning fuel such as methane would be a benefit to all.