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# A CLIMATE POLLUTANT THAT COULD HAVE BEEN A RESOURCE – AN EXAMPLE FROM THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

**METHANE MONDAYS 16 MAY  
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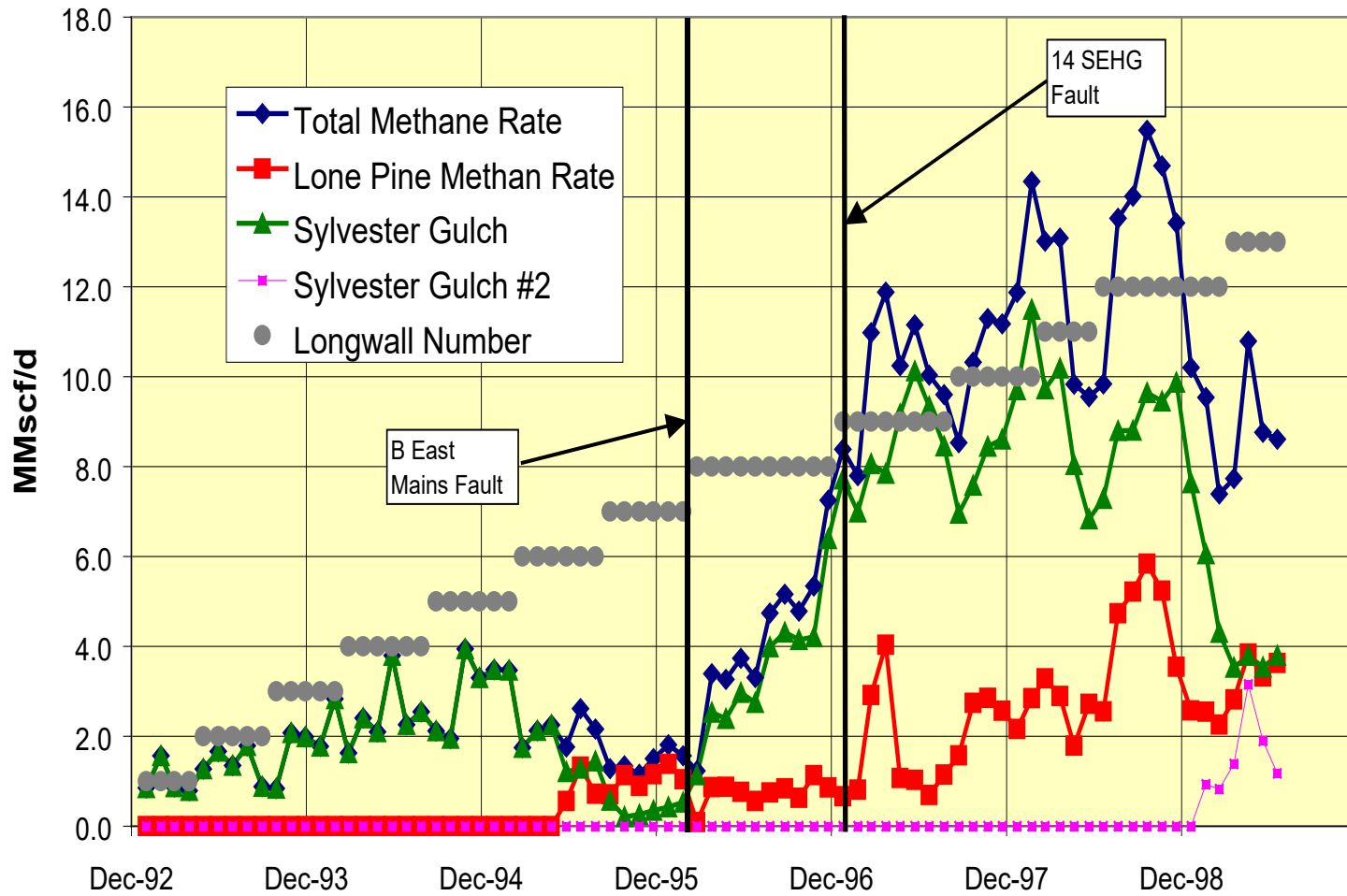
Well heads on gob vent boreholes above the West Elk Mine in western Colorado. It is 4Mtpa automated longwall coal mine.





Since 2011, methane emissions data reported to the USEPA from coal mines which are available to the public. Presently, most of West Elk's fugitive methane is emitted from the ventilation system. Gas from gob drainage has diminished through time, but did make up to 50%.





Earlier information shows that the mine has been gassy for at least three decades. Historically, most of the mines in the coalfield have been gassy and dangerous. One closed mine is producing electricity from gas pulled from the workings.



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## WHY WAS THIS GAS NOT USED OR DESTROYED?

- Studies of potential use and destruction were performed beginning in the mid 1990s and periodically performed until a couple of years ago.
- A burner system was installed to heat ventilation air in the winter. It used about 20% of available drained gas but no longer operates.
- Some gob gas is flared by a third party which harvests carbon credits.

## WHY NOT MORE?

- Up until the last decade, regulatory conflicts over gas contained in leased coal made it difficult for the mine to use the gas for benefit.
- The mine had a long-term contract with electricity provider so there was no economic advantage to generating power for self use.
- The mine could see no business case to fund emission abatement. Outside finance was not available until creation of carbon market.
- Access on the surface above the mine is strictly controlled by the US Forest Service and some of the mine extends under a designated roadless area.

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THANK YOU!

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