



Methane gas in the Northern Territory

Methane gas is naturally produced in the landscape and is part of natural gas development. To help work out what methane gas is present now and how much escapes following natural gas development, CSIRO measured the amounts of methane gas produced in the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

Finding methane

The Beetaloo Sub-basin is south-east of Katherine and is rich in natural gas from shale. CSIRO researchers drove a 4WD across the land areas where they had permission to go and measured the natural methane gas in the air. They also looked at where that methane gas might be coming from.

The research showed that the Beetaloo Sub-basin is like other rural and natural areas in the Northern Territory and Australia – methane gas was already naturally in the air. There were some areas where natural methane gas was a little higher than the background level.

The extra methane came from:

- grazing cattle
- townships
- fires
- termites
- wetlands and
- some above-ground gas pipelines.

Mapping

Scientists have made maps of methane gas levels in the Beetaloo Sub-basin area. By using information about the wind, the methane gas cloud and where the methane gas is coming from, scientists can calculate the flux and how much is in the air over time. This helps us understand how much methane gas is coming out above natural levels from existing sources, and by the gas industry in the future.