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A team of researchers from Los Alamos, NASA and the University of Michigan reported the presence of higher-than-expected concentrations of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, over the Four Corners region of the Southwestern United States.

Using remote sensing capabilities, the team found that the methane levels were nearly three times higher than what had been reported over the area by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The researchers postulate that the discrepancy stems from methane escaping from underground coalmines in the area, which added to the levels that had been expected from two nearby coal-fired power plants.

The research team believes the methane hotspot has existed over the region for nearly a decade.

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