

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY  
FOR  
Draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Agriculture Research Services**

**Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Land Exchange of Federal  
and Private Lands**

**Plains Area Office Agricultural Research Center**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Research Service, Plains Area Office has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the potential impacts associated with the proposed land exchange of ARS land in Big Spring, Howard County, TX with privately-owned land in Hale County, near Abernathy, TX. This notice announces the availability of the EA for public review and comment. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508, and evaluates the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the ARS land in Big Spring, TX would be exchanged for privately-owned land near Abernathy, TX to provide land suitable for farm cultivation research, allowing the ARS Cropping Systems Research Laboratory to meet their current research needs and mission priorities. The Big Spring site would be acquired by a third-party oil and gas company that would construct and install a wellsite and associated flow pipelines.

This EA will be open for public review for 30 days, from December 18 through January 16. An electronic copy of the EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is available on the ARS 's website at <https://www.ars.usda.gov/plains-area/lubbock-tx/cropping-systems-research-laboratory/docs/lubbock-land-swap/>. Hard copies may be obtained by contacting Ms. Shanna Henk, Facilities, Safety, and Real Property Branch, USDA ARS, 2150 Centre Avenue, Building D, Suite 300, Fort Collins, CO 80526 or via email at [shanna.henk@usda.gov](mailto:shanna.henk@usda.gov). If you wish to comment on the draft EA and FONSI, you can email or mail comments to Ms. Henk at the addresses listed above. All comments must be received by no later than 30 days from publication of this notice, January 16, 2021.