UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF WATER

DECISION MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: National Product Waiver for Pig Iron and Direct Reduced Iron for State Revolving Fund Projects

FROM: Ellen Gilinsky for Kenneth J. Kopocis
Deputy Assistant Administrator

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is hereby granting a national product waiver pursuant to the "American Iron and Steel" provisions of the Clean Water Act and Public Law 113-235, the "Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015," for certain intermediate goods used in the manufacture of iron and steel products.[1] This waiver permits the use of pig iron and direct reduced iron manufactured outside of the United States in domestic manufacturing processes for iron and steel products used in projects funded by a Clean Water or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund that may otherwise be prohibited absent this waiver. The waiver is retroactive and thus also applies to the use of non-domestic pig iron and direct reduced iron before the signature date.

Background: Pig iron and direct reduced iron are intermediate products of iron and steel manufacturing used as material feed sources in iron and steel foundries and steel mills. Pig iron is a product of iron ore smelting in a blast furnace. It is made from molten iron, which has been cast in the shape of "pigs" as it comes from the blast furnace. Direct reduced iron ore is produced from iron ore, pellets or fines, which are reduced in a solid state using natural gas. Hot briquetted iron, or HBI, is a compacted form of direct reduced iron with enhanced physical characteristics for shipment and storage.

Coverage: This waiver permits the use of iron and steel products that were manufactured using non-domestic pig iron and direct reduced iron in projects that receive funds from either the CWSRF or DWSRF. Any project that received or will receive funds from the CWSRF or DWSRF beginning with the enactment of P.L. 113-76, the "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014," may use this waiver for iron and steel that use these intermediate goods.

Rationale: The AIS provisions require CWSRF and DWSRF assistance recipients to use specific domestic iron and steel products that are produced in the United States if the project is funded

[1]Absent a waiver, all treatment works and drinking water facilities that are constructed, in whole or in part, with funds from the CWSRF or the DWSRF, must use American made iron and steel. EPA is allowed under certain circumstances to provide waivers of this requirement.

through an SRF assistance agreement unless the Agency determines that it is necessary to waive this requirement. EPA has authority to issue waivers in accordance with Section 608(c)(2) of the Clean Water Act and the AIS provisions extended by P.L. 113-235, the "Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015," under the authority of Section 424(b)(2). The provision states in part: "[the requirements] shall not apply in any case or category of cases in which the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency…finds that – iron and steel products are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities and of a satisfactory quality."

Product manufacturers and suppliers informed EPA of concerns about the sufficient availability of domestically produced pig iron and direct reduced iron. The iron and steel products produced at steel mills and foundries that use non-domestic intermediate goods are not compliant with the AIS requirements. AIS compliant products used at water and wastewater projects could be in extremely short supply should a waiver of the intermediate goods not be available.

EPA conducted extensive market research on the supply of pig iron and direct reduced iron and found that domestic supplies of these goods sold on the open market are generally not available. There are three major types of facilities that manufacture iron and steel finished products: basic oxygen furnace steel mills (BOF), electric arc furnace steel mills (EAF) and foundries. BOF steel mills undertake both iron making and steel making, as molten iron from the blast furnace is the required feedstock for BOF steel production. EAF steel mills and foundries, on the other hand, use iron and steel scrap as their principal feedstock, which must be supplemented with the use of pig iron and/or direct reduced iron in their manufacturing processes to achieve required steel qualities.

EPA market research has shown that BOF steel mills are able to produce adequate amounts of pig iron to meet their own demands, but these mills use the bulk of this production for their own processes and do not sell pig iron on the open market in sufficient quantities. At this time, there is only one producer of direct reduced iron operating in the U.S. and the company uses the output internally for EAF steel production. Therefore, EAF steel mills and foundries must import pig iron and direct reduced iron to meet their iron needs.

At least 60 percent of the nation's steel production comes from the EAF steel mills that use non-domestic pig iron and direct reduced iron in their manufacturing processes. Consequently, the majority of steel used in water and wastewater projects would not be compliant with the AIS requirements absent this waiver. Similarly, most, if not all, of the iron foundries in the United States use non-domestic pig iron and direct reduced iron to produce cast and ductile iron products used by water and wastewater projects. Therefore, the majority of iron used in water and wastewater projects would not be compliant with the AIS requirements absent this waiver. Hence, EPA is hereby providing a nationwide waiver pursuant to AIS requirements to cover the non-domestic intermediate iron goods used in the manufacture of iron and/or steel components and products for water and wastewater projects.

Public Comments: EPA requested comments on the draft national waiver and a majority of the comments received were supportive of a national waiver. The commenters in support of the waiver agreed with the Agency's conclusion that pig iron and direct reduced iron are not

produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities to meet the needs of many domestic foundries and steel mills. These commenters believe that the waiver will ensure that pig iron and direct reduced iron are treated similarly to raw material inputs in iron and steel manufacturing and by doing so the EPA will preserve the viability of the AIS requirement. These commenters also state that the waiver would treat pig iron and direct reduced iron in a manner consistent with the implementation of other similar federal laws such as the Federal Highway Administration's Buy America requirement. The FHWA issued a similar nationwide waiver of the Buy America requirements in 1995 for pig iron and processed, pelletized and reduced iron ore.

A few commenters challenged the Agency's issuance of a nationwide waiver of the AIS requirements for pig iron and direct reduced iron. These commenters disagreed with the Agency's interpretation of the AIS requirements and stated that raw materials used in iron and steel production must also be produced in the United States. In addition, the commenters questioned whether the Agency could exempt iron and steel products that are composed of non-domestic materials.

The statutory language lists the categories of products that are considered "iron and steel products." The statutory requirements include provisions that allow the EPA to issue waivers under defined conditions, including the case where iron and steel products are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities. The Agency's market research, supported by comments from manufacturers, has shown that pig iron and direct reduced iron are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities. Therefore the Agency is authorized to issue a waiver for iron and steel products composed of non-domestic pig iron and direct reduced iron.

Legal Authority: Legal authority for the AIS requirements for CWSRF projects is included under Sec. 608(c)(2) of the Clean Water Act and previously under P.L. 113-76, the "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014," under the authority of Section 436(b)(2). Legal authority for the AIS requirements for DWSRF projects is included under P.L. 113-235, the "Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015," under the authority of Section 424(b)(2) and also previously under P.L. 113-76. This waiver will continue in force for DWSRF projects under any continuing resolutions or statutes that use similar language as in Section 424 of the "Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015."

If you have questions concerning the contents of this memorandum, please contact Timothy Connor, Chemical Engineer, Municipal Support Division, at connor.timothy@epa.gov or (202) 566-1059 or Kiri Anderer, Environmental Engineer, Drinking Water Protection Division, at anderer.kirsten@epa.gov or (202) 564-3134.