



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

OCT 27 2015

OFFICE OF WATER

DECISION MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: National Product Waiver for Minor Components within Iron and Steel Products (with Cost Ceiling) for State Revolving Fund Projects

FROM: Kenneth J. Kopocis *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," (hereinafter referred to as "the Acts") for minor components within a product under an established cost ceiling.¹ The waiver will permit projects funded by the Clean Water State Revolving Fund or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund to use non-domestically produced miscellaneous minor components within an otherwise domestically produced iron and steel product for up to 5 percent of the total material cost of the product. These products could be prohibited absent this waiver. This waiver is retroactive, and so also applies to products purchased before the signature date of this waiver.

Coverage: The items covered by this waiver include miscellaneous minor components within iron and steel products as defined in the AIS provisions of the Acts. The specific minor components in covered iron and steel products will vary by product and manufacturer. Pursuant to this waiver, non-domestically produced miscellaneous minor components comprising up to 5 percent of the total material cost of an otherwise domestically produced iron and steel product may be used. This waiver does not exempt the whole product from the AIS requirements, and the primary iron or steel components of the product must be produced domestically. Unless subject to a separate waiver, all other iron and steel components in these products must still meet the AIS requirements. Valves and hydrants are also subject to the cost ceiling requirements described here. This waiver supersedes the EPA's previous guidance issued on May 30, 2014, (Question 1) related to minor components in valves and hydrants.

The coverage of this waiver is different from that of the existing national de minimis waiver. While the national de minimis waiver covers entire products (when those products are generally of low cost and incidental to the construction of the project), this waiver covers minor components within an iron and steel product. In addition, the national de minimis waiver is intended for assistance recipients to use for their projects, while this minor components waiver is intended to allow manufacturers to certify that their products comply with the AIS requirements.

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. The EPA is allowed under certain circumstances to provide waivers of this requirement.

Rationale: The AIS provisions require recipients of CWSRF and DWSRF assistance to use specific domestically-produced iron and steel products in their project, unless the Agency determines it is necessary to waive this requirement. The EPA has authority to issue waivers in accordance with Section 608(c)(1) 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)(1). The provisions state 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... applying subsection (a) would be inconsistent with the public interest.”

Many product manufacturers and suppliers identified significant compliance challenges absent this waiver. Water and wastewater utilities are generally unable to obtain a range of AIS compliant iron and steel products (such as valves, hydrants and pipe restraints) that contain 100 percent domestic components. The manufacturers stated that the origin of a significant proportion of very small minor components cannot be reliably tracked or even discerned. They provided examples of product lines that would need duplicative inventories of extremely low-cost miscellaneous minor components in order to supply AIS compliant products. Manufacturers also raised concerns related to challenges of inventory tracking, inventory control and excessive costs associated with duplicative inventory needed to supply utilities with essential domestic products.

The EPA concludes that requiring manufacturers and suppliers to overcome the challenges identified above would be inconsistent with the public’s interest. In order to balance the reliability, availability and maximum supply of domestically produced iron and steel products, it is acceptable for a manufacturer to incorporate a relatively small proportion of miscellaneous minor components of non-domestic or unknown origin within an otherwise domestically manufactured product.

Legal Authority: Legal authority for the AIS requirements for CWSRF projects is included under Sec. 608(c)(1) of the Clean Water Act and previously under P.L. 113-76, “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014,” under the authority of Section 436(b)(1). 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)(1) 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 Section 424 of the “Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015.”

If you have any 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.