

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: De Minimis waiver of Section 436 of P.L. 113-76, Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2014

FROM: Nancy N. Stoner, Acting Assistant Administrator
Office of Water

TO: Water Management Division Directors
Regions I - X

The EPA is hereby granting a nationwide waiver of the “American Iron and Steel (AIS)” requirements of P.L. 113-76, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (Act), section 436 under the authority of Section 436(b)(1) (public interest waiver) for de minimis incidental components of eligible water infrastructure projects. This action permits the use of products when they occur in de minimis incidental components of such projects funded by the Act that may otherwise be prohibited under section 436(a). Funds used for such de minimis incidental components cumulatively may comprise no more than a total of 5 percent of the total cost of the materials used in and incorporated into a project; the cost of an individual item may not exceed 1 percent of the total cost of the materials used in and incorporated into a project.

P.L. 113-76, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (Act), includes an “American Iron and Steel” (AIS) requirement in section 436 that requires Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF) and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF) assistance recipients to use specific domestic iron and steel products that are produced in the United States if the project is funded through an assistance agreement executed beginning January 17, 2014 (enactment of the Act), through the end of Fiscal Year 2014, unless the agency determines it necessary to waive this requirement based on findings set forth in Section 436(b). The Act states, “[the requirements] shall not apply in any case or category of cases in which the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency...finds that— (1) applying subsection (a) would be inconsistent with the public interest” 436(b)(1).

In implementing section 436 of the Act, EPA must ensure that the section's requirements are applied consistent with congressional intent in adopting this section and in the broader context of the purposes, objectives, and other provisions applicable to projects funded under the SRF. Water infrastructure projects typically contain a relatively small number of high-cost components incorporated into the project. In bid solicitations for a project, these high-cost components are generally described in detail via project specific technical specifications. For

these major components, utility owners and their contractors are generally familiar with the conditions of availability, the potential alternatives for each detailed specification, the approximate cost, and the country of manufacture of the available components.

Every water infrastructure project also involves the use of thousands of miscellaneous, generally low-cost components that are essential for, but incidental to, the construction and are incorporated into the physical structure of the project. For many of these incidental components, the country of manufacture and the availability of alternatives is not always readily or reasonably identifiable prior to procurement in the normal course of business; for other incidental components, the country of manufacture may be known but the miscellaneous character in conjunction with the low cost, individually and (in total) as typically procured in bulk, mark them as properly incidental. Examples of incidental components could include small washers, screws, fasteners (i.e., nuts and bolts), miscellaneous wire, corner bead, ancillary tube, etc. Examples of items that are clearly not incidental include significant process fittings (i.e., tees, elbows, flanges, and brackets), distribution system fittings and valves, force main valves, pipes for sewer collection and/or water distribution, treatment and storage tanks, large structural support structures, etc.

EPA undertook multiple inquiries to identify the approximate scope of de minimis incidental components within water infrastructure projects during the implementation of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) and its requirements (Buy American provisions, specifically). The inquiries and research conducted in 2009 applies suitably for the case today. In 2009, EPA consulted informally with many major associations representing equipment manufacturers and suppliers, construction contractors, consulting engineers, and water and wastewater utilities, and performed targeted interviews with several well-established water infrastructure contractors and firms who work in a variety of project sizes, and regional and demographic settings to ask the following questions:

- What percentage of total project costs were consumables or incidental costs?
- What percentage of materials costs were consumables or incidental costs?
- Did these percentages vary by type of project (drinking water vs. wastewater treatment plant vs. pipe)?

The responses were consistent across the variety of settings and project types, and indicated that the percentage of total costs for drinking water or wastewater infrastructure projects represented by these incidental components is generally not in excess of 5 percent of the total cost of the materials used in and incorporated into a project. In drafting this waiver, EPA has considered the de minimis proportion of project costs generally represented by each individual type of these incidental components within the many types of such components comprising those percentages, the fact that these types of incidental components are obtained by contractors in many different ways from many different sources, and the disproportionate cost and delay that would be imposed on projects if EPA did not issue this waiver.

Assistance recipients who wish to use this waiver should in consultation with their contractors determine the items to be covered by this waiver, must retain relevant documentation (i.e., invoices) as to those items in their project files, and must summarize in reports to the State the types and/or categories of items to which this waiver is applied, the total cost of incidental components covered by the waiver for each type or category, and the calculations by which they determined the total cost of materials used in and incorporated into the project.

If you have any questions concerning the contents of this memorandum, please contact Jordan Dorfman, Attorney-Advisor, State Revolving Fund Branch, Municipal Support Division, at dorfman.jordan@epa.gov or (202) 564-0614 or Kiri Anderer, Environmental Engineer, Infrastructure Branch, Drinking Water Protection Division, at anderer.kirsten@epa.gov or (202) 564-3134.