

***The following questions and answers provide guidance for implementing and complying with the AIS (American Iron & Steel) requirements:***

### **Project Coverage**

#### **1) What classes of projects are covered by the AIS requirement?**

All treatment works projects funded by a CWSRF assistance agreement, and all public water system projects funded by a DWSRF assistance agreement, from the date of enactment through the end of Federal Fiscal Year 2014, are covered. The AIS requirements apply to the entirety of the project, no matter when construction begins or ends. Additionally, the AIS requirements apply to all parts of the project, no matter the source of funding.

#### **2) Does the AIS requirement apply to nonpoint source projects or national estuary projects?**

No. Congress did not include an AIS requirement for nonpoint source and national estuary projects unless the project can also be classified as a 'treatment works' as defined by section 212 of the Clean Water Act.

#### **3) Are any projects for the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of a public water system or treatment works excluded from the AIS requirement?**

Any project, whether a treatment works project or a public water system project, for which engineering plans and specifications were approved by the responsible state agency prior to January 17, 2014, is excluded from the AIS requirements.

#### **4) What if the project does not have approved engineering plans and specifications but has signed an assistance agreement with a CWSRF or DWSRF program prior to January 17, 2014?**

The AIS requirements do not apply to any project for which an assistance agreement was signed prior to January 17, 2014.

#### **5) What if the project does not have approved engineering plans and specifications, but bids were advertised prior to January 17, 2014 and an assistance agreement was signed after January 17, 2014?**

If the project does not require approved engineering plans and specifications, the bid advertisement date will count in lieu of the approval date for purposes of the exemption in section 436(f).

#### **6) What if the assistance agreement that was signed prior to January 17, 2014, only funded a part of the overall project, where the remainder of the project will be funded later with another SRF loan?**

If the original assistance agreement funded any construction of the project, the date of the original assistance agreement counts for purposes of the exemption. If the original assistance agreement was only for planning and design, the date of that assistance agreement will count for purposes of the exemption only if there is a written commitment or expectation on the part of the assistance recipient to fund the remainder of the project with SRF funds.

#### **7) What if the assistance agreement that was signed prior to January 17, 2014, funded the first phase of a multi-phase project, where the remaining phases will be funded by SRF assistance in the future?**

In such a case, the phases of the project will be considered a single project if all construction necessary to complete the building or work, regardless of the number of contracts or assistance agreements involved, are closely related in purpose, time and place. However, there are many situations in which

major construction activities are clearly undertaken in phases that are distinct in purpose, time, or place. In the case of distinct phases, projects with engineering plans and specifications approval or assistance agreements signed prior to January 17, 2014 would be excluded from AIS requirements while those approved/signed on January 17, 2014, or later would be covered by the AIS requirements.

### **8) What if a project has split funding from a non-SRF source?**

Many States intend to fund projects with “split” funding, from the SRF program and from State or other programs. Based on the Act language in section 436, which requires that American iron and steel products be used in any project for the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of a public water system or treatment works receiving SRF funding between and including January 17, 2014 and September 30, 2014, any project that is funded in whole or in part with such funds must comply with the AIS requirement.

A “project” consists of all construction necessary to complete the building or work regardless of the number of contracts or assistance agreements involved so long as all contracts and assistance agreements awarded are closely related in purpose, time and place. This precludes the intentional splitting of SRF projects into separate and smaller contracts or assistance agreements to avoid AIS coverage on some portion of a larger project, particularly where the activities are integrally and proximately related to the whole. However, there are many situations in which major construction activities are clearly undertaken in separate phases that are distinct in purpose, time, or place, in which case, separate contracts or assistance agreement for SRF and State or other funding would carry separate requirements.

### **9) What about refinancing?**

If a project began construction, financed from a non-SRF source, prior to January 17, 2014, but is refinanced through an SRF assistance agreement executed on or after January 17, 2014 and prior to October 1, 2014, AIS requirements will apply to all construction that occurs on or after January 17, 2014, through completion of construction, unless, as is likely, engineering plans and specifications were approved by a responsible state agency prior to January 17, 2014. There is no retroactive application of the AIS requirements where a refinancing occurs for a project that has completed construction prior to January 17, 2014.

### **10) Do the AIS requirements apply to any other EPA programs, besides the SRF program, such as the Tribal Set-aside grants or grants to the Territories and DC?**

No, the AIS requirement only applies to funds made available by a State water pollution control revolving fund as authorized by title VI of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.) or made available by a drinking water treatment revolving loan fund as authorized by section 1452 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j-12)

### **Covered Iron and Steel Products**

#### **11) What is an iron or steel product?**

For purposes of the CWSRF and DWSRF projects that must comply with the AIS requirement, an iron or steel product is one of the following made primarily of iron or steel that is permanently incorporated into the public water system or treatment works:

Lined or unlined pipes or fittings;	Flanges;
Manhole Covers;	Pipe clamps and restraints;
Municipal Castings (defined in more detail below);	Valves;
Hydrants;	Structural steel (defined in more detail below);
Tanks;	Reinforced precast concrete;
	Construction materials (more detail below).

**12) What does the term ‘primarily iron or steel’ mean?**

‘Primarily iron or steel’ places constraints on the list of products above. For one of the listed products to be considered subject to the AIS requirements, it must be made of greater than 50% iron or steel, measured by cost. The cost should be based on the material costs.

**13) Can you provide an example of how to perform a cost determination?**

For example, the iron portion of a fire hydrant would likely be the bonnet, body and shoe, and the cost then would include the pouring and casting to create those components. The other material costs would include non-iron and steel internal workings of the fire hydrant (i.e., stem, coupling, valve, seals, etc.). However, the assembly of the internal workings into the hydrant body would not be included in this cost calculation. If one of the listed products is not made primarily of iron or steel, United States (US) provenance is not required. An exception to this definition is reinforced precast concrete, which is addressed in a later question.

**14) If a product is composed of more than 50% iron or steel, but is not listed in the above list of items, must the item be produced in the US? Alternatively, must the iron or steel in such a product be produced in the US?**

The answer to both question is no. Only items on the above list must be produced in the US. Additionally, the iron or steel in a non-listed item can be sourced from outside the US.

**15) What is the definition of steel?**

Steel means an alloy that includes at least 50 percent iron, between .02 and 2 percent carbon, and may include other elements. Metallic elements such as chromium, nickel, molybdenum, manganese, and silicon may be added during the melting of steel for the purpose of enhancing properties such as corrosion resistance, hardness, or strength. The definition of steel covers carbon steel, alloy steel, stainless steel, tool steel, and other specialty steels.

**16) What does ‘produced in the United States’ mean?**

Production in the United States of the iron or steel products used in the project requires that all manufacturing processes, including application of coatings, must take place in the United States, with the exception of metallurgical processes involving refinement of steel additives. All manufacturing processes includes processes such as melting, refining, forming, rolling, drawing, finishing, fabricating and coating. Further, if a domestic iron and steel product is taken out of the US for any part of the manufacturing process, it becomes foreign source material. However, raw materials such as iron ore, limestone and iron and steel scrap are not covered by the AIS requirement, and the material(s), if any, being applied as a coating are similarly not covered. Non-iron or steel components of an iron and steel product may come from non-US sources. For example, for products such as valves and hydrants, the individual non-iron and steel components do not have to be of domestic origin.

**17) Are the raw materials used in the production of iron or steel required to come from US sources?**

No. Raw materials, such as iron ore, limestone, scrap iron, and scrap steel, can come from non-US sources.

**18) If an above listed item is primarily made of iron or steel, but is only at the construction site temporarily, must such an item be produced in the US?**

No. Only the above listed products made primarily of iron or steel, permanently incorporated into the project must be produced in the US. For example trench boxes, scaffolding or equipment, which are

removed from the project site upon completion of the project, are not required to be made of U.S. Iron or Steel.

### **19) What is the definition of ‘municipal castings’?**

Municipal castings are cast iron or steel infrastructure products that are melted and cast. They typically provide access, protection, or housing for components incorporated into utility owned drinking water, storm water, wastewater, and surface infrastructure. They are typically made of grey or ductile iron, or steel. Examples of municipal castings are:

Access Hatches;	Drainage Grates, Frames and Curb Inlets;
Ballast Screen;	Inlets;
Benches (Iron or Steel);	Junction Boxes;
Bollards;	Lampposts;
Cast Bases;	Manhole Covers, Rings and Frames, Risers;
Cast Iron Hinged Hatches, Square and Rectangular;	Meter Boxes;
Cast Iron Riser Rings;	Service Boxes;
Catch Basin Inlet;	Steel Hinged Hatches, Square and Rectangular;
Cleanout/Monument Boxes;	Steel Riser Rings;
Construction Covers and Frames;	Trash receptacles;
Curb and Corner Guards;	Tree Grates;
Curb Openings;	Tree Guards;
Detectable Warning Plates;	Trench Grates; and
Downspout Shoes (Boot, Inlet);	Valve Boxes, Covers and Risers.

### **20) What is ‘structural steel’?**

Structural steel is rolled flanged shapes, having at least one dimension of their cross-section three inches or greater, which are used in the construction of bridges, buildings, ships, railroad rolling stock, and for numerous other constructional purposes. Such shapes are designated as wide-flange shapes, standard I-beams, channels, angles, tees and zeeks. Other shapes include H-piles, sheet piling, tie plates, cross ties, and those for other special purposes.

### **21) What is a ‘construction material’ for purposes of the AIS requirement?**

Construction materials are those articles, materials, or supplies made primarily of iron and steel, that are permanently incorporated into the project, not including mechanical and/or electrical components, equipment and systems. Some of these products may overlap with what is also considered “structural steel”. This includes, but is not limited to, the following products: wire rod, bar, angles, concrete reinforcing bar, wire, wire cloth, wire rope and cables, tubing, framing, joists, trusses, fasteners (i.e., nuts and bolts), welding rods, decking, grating, railings, stairs, access ramps, fire escapes, ladders, wall panels, dome structures, roofing, ductwork, surface drains, cable hanging systems, manhole steps, fencing and fence tubing, guardrails, doors, and stationary screens.

### **22) What is not considered a ‘construction material’ for purposes of the AIS requirement?**

Mechanical and electrical components, equipment and systems are not considered construction materials. Mechanical equipment is typically that which has motorized parts and/or is powered by a motor. Electrical equipment is typically any machine powered by electricity and includes components that are part of the electrical distribution system.

The following examples (including their appurtenances necessary for their intended use and operation) are NOT considered construction materials:

Pumps,

Motors,

Gear reducers,  
Drives (including variable frequency drives (vfds)),  
Electric/pneumatic/manual accessories used to operate valves (such as electric valve actuators),  
Mixers,  
Gates,  
Motorized screens (such as traveling screens),  
Blowers/aeration equipment,  
Compressors,  
Meters,  
Sensors,  
Controls and switches,  
Supervisory control and data acquisition (scada),  
Membrane bioreactor systems,  
Membrane filtration systems,  
Filters,  
Clarifiers and clarifier mechanisms,

Rakes,  
Grinders,  
Disinfection systems,  
Presses (including belt presses),  
Conveyors,  
Cranes,  
Hvac (excluding ductwork),  
Water heaters,  
Heat exchangers,  
Generators,  
Cabinetry and housings (such as electrical boxes/enclosures),  
Lighting fixtures,  
Electrical conduit,  
Emergency life systems,  
Metal office furniture,  
Shelving,  
Laboratory equipment,  
Analytical instrumentation, and  
Dewatering equipment.

**23) If the iron or steel is produced in the US, may other steps in the manufacturing process take place outside of the US, such as assembly?**

No. Production in the US of the iron or steel used in a listed product requires that all manufacturing processes must take place in the United States, except metallurgical processes involving refinement of steel additives.

**24) What processes must occur in the US to be compliant with the AIS requirement for reinforced precast concrete?**

While reinforced precast concrete may not be at least 50% iron or steel, in this particular case, the reinforcing bar and wire must be produced in the US and meet the same standards as for any other iron or steel product. Additionally, the casting of the concrete product must take place in the US. The cement and other raw materials used in concrete production are not required to be of domestic origin.

If the reinforced concrete is cast at the construction site, the reinforcing bar and wire are considered to be a construction material and must be produced in the US.

**Compliance**

**25) How should an assistance recipient document compliance with the AIS requirement?**

In order to ensure compliance with the AIS requirement, specific AIS contract language must be included in each contract, starting with the assistance agreement, all the way down to the purchase agreements. Sample language for assistance agreements and contracts can be found in Appendix 3 and 4.

EPA recommends the use of a step certification process, similar to one used by the Federal Highway Administration. The step certification process is a method to ensure that producers adhere to the AIS requirement and assistance recipients can verify that products comply with the AIS requirement. The process also establishes accountability and better enables States to take enforcement actions against violators.

Step certification creates a paper trail which documents the location of the manufacturing process involved with the production of steel and iron materials. A step certification is a process under which each handler (supplier, fabricator, manufacturer, processor, etc) of the iron and steel products certifies that

their step in the process was domestically performed. Each time a step in the manufacturing process takes place, the manufacturer delivers its work along with a certification of its origin. A certification can be quite simple. Typically, it includes the name of the manufacturer, the location of the manufacturing facility where the product or process took place (not its headquarters), a description of the product or item being delivered, and a signature by a manufacturer's responsible party. Attached, as Appendix 5, are sample certifications. These certifications should be collected and maintained by assistance recipients.

Alternatively, the final manufacturer that delivers the iron or steel product to the worksite, vendor, or contractor, may provide a certification asserting that all manufacturing processes occurred in the US. While this type of certification may be acceptable, it may not provide the same degree of assurance. Additional documentation may be needed if the certification is lacking important information. Step certification is the best practice.

## **26) How should a State ensure assistance recipients are complying with the AIS requirement?**

In order to ensure compliance with the AIS requirement, States SRF programs must include specific AIS contract language in the assistance agreement. Sample language for assistance agreements can be found in Appendix 3.

States should also, as a best practice, conduct site visits of projects during construction and review documentation demonstrating proof of compliance which the assistance recipient has gathered.

## **27) What happens if a State or EPA finds a non-compliant iron and/or steel product permanently incorporated in the project?**

If a potentially non-compliant product is identified, the State should notify the assistance recipient of the apparent unauthorized use of the non-domestic component, including a proposed corrective action, and should be given the opportunity to reply. If unauthorized use is confirmed, the State can take one or more of the following actions:

- ✓ request a waiver where appropriate;
- ✓ require the removal of the non-domestic item; or
- ✓ withhold payment for all or part of the project.

Only EPA can issue waivers to authorize the use of a non-domestic item. EPA may use remedies available to it under the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and 40 CFR part 31 grant regulations, in the event of a violation of a grant term and condition.

It is recommended that the State work collaboratively with EPA to determine the appropriate corrective action, especially in cases where the State is the one who identifies the item in noncompliance or there is a disagreement with the assistance recipient.

If fraud, waste, abuse, or any violation of the law is suspected, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) should be contacted immediately. The OIG can be reached at 1-888-546-8740 or [OIG\\_Hotline@epa.gov](mailto:OIG_Hotline@epa.gov). More information can be found at this website: <http://www.epa.gov/oig/hotline.htm>.

## **28) How do international trade agreements affect the implementation of the AIS requirements?**

The AIS provision applies in a manner consistent with United States obligations under international agreements. Typically, these obligations only apply to direct procurement by the entities that are signatories to such agreements. In general, SRF assistance recipients are not signatories to such agreements, so these agreements have no impact on this AIS provision. In the few instances where such an agreement applies to a municipality, that municipality is under the obligation to determine its applicability and requirements and document the actions taken to comply for the State.