



For Immediate Release

Steel Dynamics LLC Found To Violate Texas Water Code The Aransas Project Calls On Company To Do Better

On January 12, 2021, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) released results of the investigation generated by a complaint filed with TCEQ on November 3, 2020 by the Aransas Project (TAP). The TCEQ investigation found Steel Dynamics, LLC violated the *Texas Water Code* by beginning construction of a wastewater treatment facility before obtaining an active industrial wastewater discharge permit for their steel mill.

Steel Dynamics is constructing a massive steel mill near Sinton, Texas and seeks an industrial wastewater permit from TCEQ to discharge over 1.5 million gallons of treated industrial wastewater into Chiltipin Creek, which flows into the Aransas River near its confluence with Copano Bay. The Aransas Project filed Comments in December 2020 objecting to the permit and seeking a contested case hearing over the potential harm to Chiltipin Creek and Copano Bay.

The Aransas Project is a Texas nonprofit alliance of county and municipal governments, environmental organizations and individuals dedicated to protecting both the quantity and quality of freshwater riverine inflows into the Copano-Aransas-San Antonio Bay system. Untainted freshwater inflows are critical because this environmentally sensitive area remains the winter home to the world's only remaining wild flock of endangered Whooping Cranes and to the crab population upon which they depend in their estuarine habitat. This proposed discharge of heavy metals such as lead and copper will contaminate and potentially kill crabs, the primary food source of Whooping Cranes, as well as threaten other aquatic life including commercially valuable gamefish and shrimp.

The TCEQ's recommended corrective action requires Steel Dynamics, LLC to cease construction on the unpermitted wastewater treatment plant and to submit proof of compliance to the TCEQ by March 15, 2021.

“The Aransas Project (TAP) filed this complaint to bring attention to this very dangerous discharge and to the apparent disregard for the laws of Texas,” said Jim Blackburn, President of The Aransas Project. “TAP would like to work with Steel Dynamics if possible to avert a fight over this discharge that we feel will endanger the health of Copano Bay, a jewel of productivity that we all should stand up for. We are planning to reach out and contact management of Steel Dynamics and ask for them to meet with us as well as to reach out to potential customers to ask them to encourage Steel Dynamics to work with us to find an alternative to this devastating plan currently before the TCEQ. If necessary, we will fight, but we would prefer not to.”

Ann Hamilton, a TAP board member, added “We are really concerned about the health of the fishery and the marine food chain which involves those species that depend upon the blue crab including endangered species like the whooping crane and the Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle. We have litigated to protect these species in the past and will again but would rather work with the company to solve this problem.

TAP’s attorney Bryan French added, “We are doing our due diligence and working to protect Chiltipin Creek, Copano Bay and the marine ecosystem. There has to be a better way than discharging these toxic water pollutants into the bay.”

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