Intalco Aluminum LLC

On behalf of Intalco Aluminum LLC, please find our comments in the attached letter.

Intalco Aluminum LLC

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October 14, 2022

Ms. Kelsey Holbrook
Washington State Department of Ecology
Industrial Section
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98503-7600

Re: Comments on the Intalco Sulfur Dioxide Attainment Plan

Dear Ms. Holbrook:

Intalco Aluminum LLC ("Intalco") would like to take this opportunity to provide comments on the Intalco Sulfur Dioxide Attainment Plan (dated September 2022),[1] or State Implementation Plan revision (SIP), developed by Washington State Department of Ecology ("Ecology") in response to the 1-hour sulfur dioxide (SO_2) nonattainment area (NAA) designation. Following the public comment period, we understand that Ecology will submit the SO_2 attainment plan for review by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and EPA will present its intended action (approval or disapproval), which will then be posted for public comment in 2023.

Intalco has worked with Ecology on some aspects of the SIP. Specifically, we negotiated with Ecology on the SO_2 emissions limits and operational conditions within Agreed Order 21310 (SIP Appendix D) and Intalco, and their consultant AECOM, developed the Intalco SO_2 Attainment Plan Modeling Report (SIP Appendix C). As the Intalco SO_2 Attainment Plan Modeling Report explains, Intalco has curtailed operations at the end of August 2020, thereby reducing SO_2 emissions to zero. Since then, the ambient air monitoring stations in the NAA have been measuring SO_2 concentrations at background levels, well below the 1-hour SO_2 National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). Therefore, measures to be taken at the Intalco facility to reduce SO_2 emissions are only necessary should the facility restart operations and within the timeline cited in the Agreed Order.

Intalco has reviewed other aspects of the SIP posted for public comment and would like to provide feedback. Overall, we agree with Ecology's characterization of the SO_2 Attainment Plan Modeling Report prepared by Intalco and AECOM. We appreciate Ecology's recognition that the modeling report used conservative, worst case assumptions in that, as Ecology states, "The modeling presented assumes conservatism in the SO_2 emission control device (modeled at 80% efficiency despite being designed for 90% efficiency), explicitly modeling scenarios if the SO_2 emission control device is non-operational, and including the maximum monthly average emissions of the

[1] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2202035.html

nearby modeled refineries to assume that the nearby sources emit constantly at the highest monthly emission rate."

There are a few notable areas of the SIP that Intalco requests revisions or clarification. The SIP sections and Intalco comments are described below.

Executive Summary, Introduction

In the SIP Executive Summary and Introduction sections (p. 12, 13), there is no mention of the Intalco curtailment or that Intalco is currently emitting no SO_2 because of the curtailment. This topic is not discussed until the Intalco Primary Metals Works Aluminum Smelter section (p. 20). As a result of the curtailment, the monitored SO_2 concentrations in the NAA have dropped to very low background levels. In a related matter, there have been some public news articles that vaguely refer to continued SO_2 issues during the curtailment period that are inaccurate.

Comment: We request that Ecology add a clarifying statement to the Executive Summary in which the Intalco curtailment is recognized as well as its effect upon the monitored SO_2 concentrations in the NAA. This simple revision could address potential misunderstandings of the facility's current status. Once Ecology finalizes the SIP, Intalco understands that the SIP will be submitted to EPA. A clarifying statement regarding the curtailment could also benefit EPA's review process during which EPA will review the SIP and present its intended action (approval or disapproval), which will be posted for a public comment period in 2023.

Intalco Primary Metals Works Aluminum Smelter

Ecology states that Alcoa built the Intalco Primary Metals Works aluminum smelter (Intalco) in 1965 in Whatcom County. (p. 20)

Comment: In the SIP Intalco Primary Metals Works Aluminum Smelter section, please note that the Intalco smelter began operations as Intalco Aluminum Corp., under the ownership of Alumax, Pechiney and Howmet. In 1998, Alcoa Inc. and Alumax merged, creating Alcoa Intalco Works. By 2006, Alcoa bought out its remaining partners; however, at all times Intalco has been the owner and operator of the facility.

Non-SO_2 Regulatory Actions

In the SIP Non-SO_2 Regulatory Actions section (p. 29), Ecology lists historical enforcement actions and notices of violation for Intalco related to pollutants other than SO_2.

Comment: We would like to request the removal of the "Ecology's Enforcement Actions" and "EPA Notices of Violation" sections, which are not relevant to the Intalco SO_2 Attainment Plan. Intalco has had no recent enforcement actions or notices of violation for SO_2, the pollutant at issue in the SIP.

Control Strategy – Required Level of Control / RACM

In the SIP Required Level of Control / RACM section (p. 56), Ecology describes a condition within Agreed Order 21310 that requires Intalco to notify Ecology prior to any planned curtailment to the entire portion of potline A that Center 1's SO_2 wet scrubber system would serve. In the SIP, Ecology writes that if Center 1's pots are curtailed, then Ecology will evaluate the circumstances

and take enforcement action as necessary. Ecology further states that, "For example, Ecology may require additional modeling to demonstrate achievement of the NAAQS when the credit for stack adjustments is not included." This section appears to indicate that if the SO_2 control is not operational for a period longer than periodic maintenance/malfunction, then Ecology may view it as a violation of the Agreed Order.

Comment: We ask that the statement of potential enforcement action or additional modeling in the event of Center 1's curtailment be removed from the SIP. Agreed Order 21310 requires Intalco to notify Ecology if Center 1 pots are curtailed; however, the Agreed Order does not limit the duration of a curtailment. It should be recognized that if Center 1 pots are curtailed, then the resulting emissions are much lower (zero) than they would be when the SO_2 control is operational. In the Intalco SO_2 Attainment Plan Modeling Report, modeling demonstrates compliance when Center 1 pots are operational with and without the SO_2 wet scrubber control. Therefore, one can conclude that zero emissions for Center 1 would also demonstrate compliance.

Contingency Measures

The SIP Contingency Measures section (p. 84) explains that the Clean Air Act requires an attainment SIP to identify specific contingency measures that will be put in place should the SIP fail to make reasonable further progress or fail to bring the NAA into attainment by the applicable attainment date. Ecology identified three Contingency Measure Thresholds that would trigger the implementation of contingency measures. In particular, "threshold exceedance" #3 would trigger contingency measures if a three-year design value at the Mountain View or Kickerville monitor is greater than 67.5 ppb, which is less than the 1-hour SO_2 NAAQS of 75 ppb. If SO_2 air monitoring stations' data exceeds any of the three thresholds, Ecology states they would require review of Intalco operations for violations of the Agreed Order 21310 and SIP. If the review finds that Intalco was in compliance but still caused the "threshold exceedance", Ecology will consult with Intalco to seek one or more operational changes to implement as necessary "to reasonably prevent any future monitored violation of the standard." The operational change would be implemented within at least 18 months of the date that the threshold exceedance was identified by Ecology.

Comment: We request that Ecology rephrase this section to remove the requirement of further operational changes in the event of "threshold exceedances" and instead focus on using the exceedances to review ambient air monitoring data, determine the cause of the "threshold exceedance", and, if needed, begin a conversation between Intalco and Ecology to review operational practices. Contingency measures are applicable if a NAA fails to make reasonable further progress or fails to meet the NAAQS by the applicable attainment date. Through this proposed provision, Ecology is seeking to implement contingency measures before the NAA would fail to meet the NAAQS. The potential to require further operational changes at Intalco if a lower-than-NAAQS threshold is exceeded (threshold #3's 67.5 ppb design value vs. the 75 ppb NAAQS) is unsupported because it is not a violation of the standard. Ecology fails to explain why they have selected a threshold that is below the NAAQS to prevent "a monitored violation of the standard" when this threshold is below the standard. Therefore, we suggest that if any "threshold exceedance" occurs, but the three-year design value is still below the NAAQS, Ecology should consult with Intalco to better understand the operational and/or meteorological conditions associated with peak monitored concentrations. This consultation may lead to a conclusion that continued Intalco operation without modification is still not likely to result in a NAAQS violation.

As one example, the consultation may determine that unusual (i.e., infrequent) meteorological conditions led to the elevated (but still less than the NAAQS) concentrations, and that no facility changes are needed at this time.

We thank Ecology for consideration of these comments during the public review process.

Sincerely,

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