



Monthly

Bulletin

Environmental Crimes Section

October 2020

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“We are all responsible for keeping our communities safe and protecting our natural resources. 4 Brothers’ Dairy and its owner, Andrew Fitzgerald, failed in this regard when they allowed hundreds of thousands of gallons of manure to enter the Milner-Gooding Canal, a tributary to some of Idaho’s most treasured waterways,” said Scot Adair, Special Agent in Charge of EPA’s Criminal Investigation Division in the Northwest. “Today’s guilty plea demonstrates that we will hold violators accountable for breaking our environmental laws.” [From [press release](#) for guilty plea taken in *U.S. v. 4 Bros.’ Dairy*. See, [below](#), for more details on this case.]

District/Circuit	Case Name	Case Type/Statutes
Middle District of Alabama	<u>United States v. Joon LLC</u>	Employee Death/OSHA
██████████	██	████████████████████
Eastern District of California	<u>United States v. Marco Lizandro Duarte-Beltran</u>	Marijuana Cultivation/ Drug, Depredation of Public Lands, Firearms
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Middle District of Florida	<u>United States v. Akbar Akram</u>	Reptile Trafficking/Lacey Act
████████████████████ ██████████	██ ██	██
Southern District of Georgia	<u>United States v. Serendipity Business Solutions, LLC, et al.</u>	International Money Laundering, Drug, and Wildlife Trafficking
District of Idaho	<u>United States v. 4 Bros. Dairy, et al.</u>	CAFO/CWA
District of Kansas	<u>United States v. David Schleif</u>	WWTP Discharges/CWA
Eastern District of Louisiana	<u>United States v. Marc A. Victoriano</u> <u>United States v. William McGinness et al.</u>	Theft Concerning Programs Receiving Federal Funds Bird Trafficking/Conspiracy, Lacey Act
District of Minnesota	<u>United States v. Robert D. Latourell, Jr., et al.</u> <u>United States v. Brett J. Stimac</u>	Hunting/Conspiracy, Lacey Act Bear Killing/Hunting on Indian Land, Lacey Act
Southern District of Mississippi	██ <u>United States v. Khiem Dinh Vu</u>	██ ████████████████████ Seafood Sales/Conspiracy, Lacey Act

District/Circuit	Case Name	Case Type/Statutes
Eastern District of North Carolina	<u>United States v. Jeffrey Styron</u>	Crabmeat Sales/Lacey Act
Western District of North Carolina	<u>United States v. David Lutz</u>	Municipal Employee/RCRA
Southern District of Ohio	<u>United States v. Khaled Ebrigit et al.</u> <u>United States v. Tina Imes et al.</u>	Waste Disposal/RCRA Refrigerant Venting/CAA, Conspiracy
Northern District of Ohio	<u>United States v. Mohamed Salem, et al.</u>	Illegal Meat Sales/ Animal Slaughtering, CWA
Middle District of Pennsylvania	<u>United States v. Rockwater Northeast LLC, et al.</u>	Vehicle Emissions Tampering/ CAA, NPA
District of South Dakota	<u>United States v. Troy Fairbanks et al.</u>	Eagle Part Sales/BGEPA, Conspiracy
Eastern District of Tennessee	<u>United States v. Cynthia Macias-Martinez</u>	Hummingbird Sales/MBTA
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Western District of Washington	<u>United States v. Shawn Williams et al.</u>	Timber Sales/Theft of Public Property/ Fire

Indictments/Informations

United States v. Robert D. Latourell, Jr., et al., No. 20-mj-00687 (D. Minn.), AUSA Emily Polachek.

On September 10, 2020, prosecutors charged resort owners Robert D. Latourell, Jr., Melinda M. Latourell, and Melissa A. Latourell, with conspiring to violate the Lacey Act (18 U.S.C. § 371; 16 U.S.C. §§ 3372 (a)(2)(A), 3373(d)(2), 3374(a)(1)).

The defendants own and operate a resort on the shores of Moose Lake, near Ely, Minnesota, inside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and the Superior National Forest. In addition to providing guided fishing trips and boat towing services inside the BWCAW, the defendants also operate a motorized portage at Prairie Portage, pursuant to a federal contract administered by the United States Forest Service (USFS). The Prairie Portage is situated along the United States-Canada border.

Beginning in approximately October 2012 until December 2016, the defendants used their access afforded to them by their contract with the USFS, to enter the protected waters of the Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada, on numerous occasions and used seine nets and other methods to unlawfully harvest ciscoes. Ciscoes (*Coregonus artedii*) are pelagic fish found in the waters along the United States-Canada border, where they spawn in the late fall. Those who sell ciscoes (known as lake herring or tullibee) package, freeze, and sell them to bait and convenience stores, gas stations, and other vendors throughout northern Minnesota. The defendants unlawfully imported, possessed, transported, and sold ciscoes for thousands of dollars to bait retailers in violation of the Lacey Act.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Ontario (Canada) Ministry of Natural Resources, Homeland Security Investigations, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police conducted the investigation, with assistance from the 1854 Treaty Authority, the United States Forest Service's Office of Law Enforcement and Investigations, the International Boundary Commission, and the Duluth Police Department.

Indictments/Informations

United States v. Serendipity Business Solutions, LLC, et al., No. 4:20-CR-00056 (S.D. Ga.), AUSAs E. Greg Gilluly Jr., Tania Groover, Xavier Cunningham, and Joshua Bearden, with assistance from Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section Trial Attorney Joseph Palazzo.

On September 3, 2020, prosecutors unsealed an indictment charging 12 individuals and two companies for their involvement in an international money laundering, drug, and wildlife trafficking operation. Initiated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, “Operation Apex” brought together multiple agencies under the umbrella of the Organized Crime Drug Task Forces (OCDETF) to target two businesses in Florida and California, and a dozen individual defendants whose activities included international trade in illegal wildlife products, trafficking in marijuana, and a money laundering conspiracy to disguise massive proceeds from unlawful activities spanning at least a decade (18 U.S.C. §§ 1349, 1956(h); 21 U.S.C. § 846).

Following the unsealing of the indictment, investigators arrested 12 defendants for their activities in wildlife trafficking, shark finning, drug trafficking, and money laundering. Agents also executed 22 search warrants from coast to coast, including in the Southern District of Georgia, the Northern District of Georgia, the Northern District of Florida, the Eastern District of Michigan, the Central District of California, and the Northern District of California. Conspirators around the United States and other countries (including Hong Kong, Mexico and Canada), engaged in wildlife trafficking, shark finning, drug trafficking and money laundering.

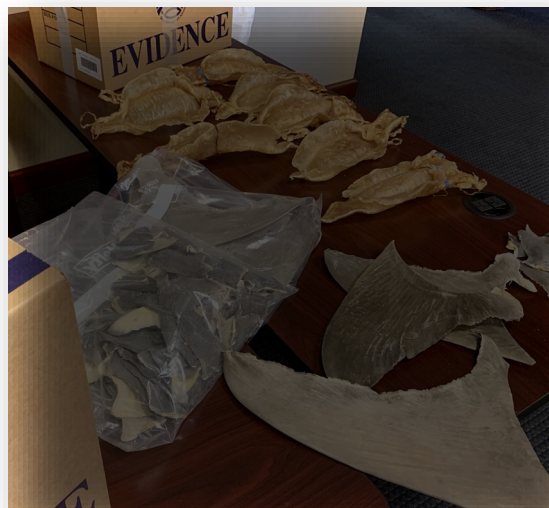
As early as 2010, conspirators submitted false documents, used sham businesses, and utilized dozens of bank accounts, to hide proceeds from the illegal activities. They deposited bulk cash from illegal activities, including wildlife trafficking and drug trafficking, into third-party business accounts that dealt in gold, precious metals, and jewels, to hide the illegal activities.

As a result of the multiple searches, agents seized more than \$3.9 million from several bank accounts; approximately \$3 million in gold, silver, and other precious metals, along with \$1 million in diamonds; approximately 18,000 marijuana plants and 34.5 pounds of processed marijuana; and numerous firearms. Agents documented the harvest of more than six tons of shark fins and seized 18 rare totababa fish bladders.

Prosecutors charged various defendants based on their roles in the criminal organization, as described below:

The California-based company Serendipity Business Solutions, LLC, (SBS), engaged in international wildlife trafficking, drug trafficking, and money laundering. Terry Xing Zhao

(Continued on page 7)



Shark fins and totoaba bladders seized by authorities

Indictments/Informations

(Continued from page 6)

Wu operated SBS, directed the shark fin exports, and authorized shark fin payments. Terry Wu further handled the sale of shark fins to conspirators in Hong Kong. Billy Chen assisted with international wildlife trafficking.

Natalie Ye Man Chan Wu, the manager for SBS, conducted financial transactions and signed checks for payment of shark fins. Woonjin Lam coordinated marijuana distribution and laundered money, with the help of Anthony Wu, Terry Louis Shook, and Ying Le Pang. The Florida-based company, Phoenix Fisheries, LLC, engaged in international wildlife trafficking and money laundering. Mark Leon Harrison (Phoenix Fisheries owner), prepared false and misleading commercial invoices and export documents on behalf of Phoenix for shark fins.

Heather Huong Ngoc Luu, Lam Phuoc Quang, Kevin Chinh Nguyen, and Elias Samuel Castellanos transported bulk cash from illegal proceeds and wired the illegal proceeds to third party business bank accounts to hide millions of dollars.

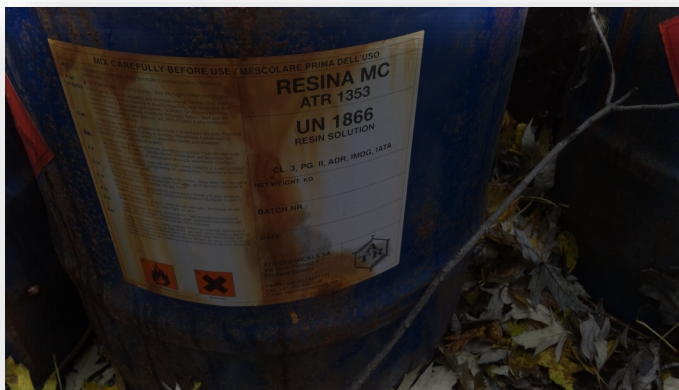
Agencies conducting the investigation include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Investigations Unit, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Customs and Border Protection, and Homeland Security Investigations, in conjunction with state and local agencies including the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Guilty Pleas

United States v. Khaled Ebrigit et al., Nos. 2:19-CR-00252, 2:20-CR-00014 (S.D. Ohio), ECS Trial Attorney Adam Cullman, and AUSA Mike Marous.

On September 30, 2020, Khaled Ebrigit pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) for illegally transporting and disposing of hazardous waste (18 U.S.C. § 371; 42 U.S.C. §§ 6928(d)(1),(d)(2)(A)).

In October 2018, Conrex Property Management paid Ebrigit \$5,000 to remove drums containing “chemical substances” from behind a property the company purchased. Ebrigit paid Martin Eldridge \$400 to dispose of three 55-gallon drums and



Abandoned hazardous waste drum

64 ten-gallon drums, most of which were clearly labeled “flammable” with detailed handling information. Eldridge loaded the drums (many of which were leaking) into his van dropping them off next to dumpsters at several apartment complexes throughout Columbus. Emergency personnel responded to reports of the illegal dumping, by collecting the drums, and performing site cleanup. Eldridge previously pleaded guilty to violating RCRA.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigation Division conducted the investigation.

United States v. 4 Bros. Dairy, et al., No. 1:20-CR-00216 (D. Idaho), AUSAs Joshua Hurwitt and Sean Mazorol.

On September 24, 2020, 4 Bros. Dairy and owner, Andrew Fitzgerald, agreed to plead guilty to violating the Clean Water Act for negligently discharging wastewater without a permit (33 U.S.C. §§ 1319(c)(1)(a), 1311(a), 1342). The court accepted the plea on October 30, 2020, and scheduled sentencing for January 14, 2021.

This dairy operates as a large concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO), housing more than 1,000 cattle. As such, the CAFO qualifies as a point source, subject to permitting under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program. The dairy utilized several different wastewater lagoons to contain manure-laden wastewater. The lagoons are adjacent to the Milner-Gooding Canal (Canal), which flows to the Malad River, and ultimately the Snake and Columbia Rivers.

A record amount of snow and precipitation fell during the winter of 2016-2017 in this area. Officials issued numerous disaster declarations due to flooding caused by snow and runoff volumes not seen for decades. Because of this situation, the dairy discharged manure-laden wastewater into the Canal on February 10, 2017. As a result, the catchment area overtopped, inadvertently breached, discharging snowmelt and manure into the Canal

(Continued on page 9)

Guilty Pleas

(Continued from page 8)

for four days. The defendants failed to repair the lagoon until February 23, 2017, despite knowing about the breach. Failing to repair the lagoon for fourteen days was not reasonable under the circumstances and amounts to a failure to exercise that degree of care which a person of ordinary prudence would exercise under similar circumstances.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigation Division, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the Idaho Department of Agriculture, and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office conducted the investigation.

United States v. Rockwater Northeast LLC, et al., Nos. 4:20-CR-00230, 4:18-CR-00174, 00267 (M.D. Penn.), AUSAs Phillip J. Caraballo and Sean Camoni, and SAUSA Patricia C. Miller.

On September 24, 2020, Rockwater Northeast LLC pleaded guilty to violating the Clean Air Act (CAA) for tampering with diesel truck emissions' systems (42 U.S.C. § 7413 (c)(2)(C)). Rockwater provides water management services to companies in the oil and gas industry. The company tampered with the emissions systems on 31 heavy-duty diesel trucks it owned, installing "defeat devices" that disabled the trucks' emissions diagnostic systems. The company also ensured the trucks passed annual Department of Transportation (DOT) vehicle safety inspections, despite the modified emissions systems.

Separately, Select Energy Services, Inc., (SES) a Texas-based company and the successor-in-interest to Rockwater Energy Solutions, Inc. (parent company of Rockwater Northeast LLC) entered into a three-year non-prosecution agreement (NPA) with the United States. The agreement resolves CAA violations for modified emissions systems on an additional 29 diesel trucks Rockwater Energy Solutions owned. SES cooperated with the investigation since acquiring Rockwater Energy Solutions in 2017.

Rockwater Northeast LLC agreed to pay a monetary resolution of \$2 million, and SES agreed to pay a monetary resolution of \$2.3 million. Under the NPA, SES will continue cooperating with the government, and implement an environmental compliance program designed to prevent future CAA violations. SES also will conduct annual audits during the three-year term of the agreement.

In addition, the government prosecuted six individuals: Gavin Rexer, Dennis Paulhamus, Joseph Powell, John Joseph, and Timothy Sweitzer. All await sentencing after pleading guilty to conspiring to defraud the government and to violate the CAA. The court previously sentenced Brian Mellot to six months' incarceration, followed by one year of supervised release.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigation Division and the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General, conducted the investigation, with assistance from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and the Pennsylvania State Police.

Guilty Pleas

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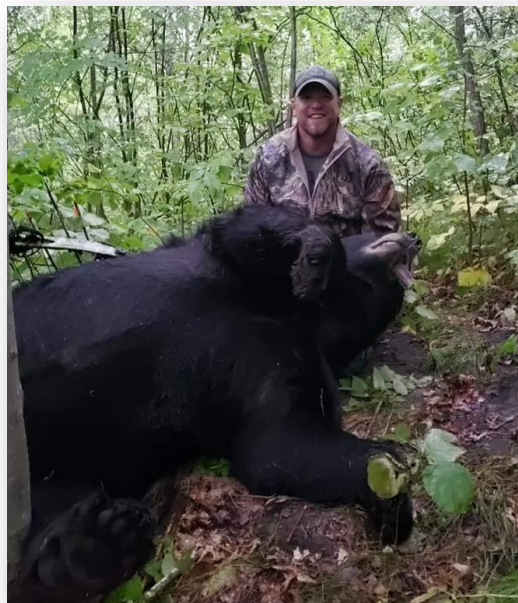
United States v. Brett J. Stimac, No. 19-mj-00818 (D. Minn.), AUSA Emily Polachek and SAUSA Gina Allery.

On September 17, 2020, Brett J. Stimac pleaded guilty to violating the Lacey Act and trespassing on Indian lands after shooting and killing a bear on the Red Lake Indian Reservation (16 U.S.C §§ 3372(a)(1), 3373(d)(2); 18 U.S.C. § 1165).

In September 2019, Stimac shot and killed a 700-pound American black bear near the Reservation's garbage dump. He also posted photos of himself and the bear's carcass on Facebook. Stimac is not an enrolled member of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians; the tribe further forbids non-Indians to hunt bear, a clan animal, due to the animal's spiritual significance.

Stimac could not remove the large bear from the Reservation. Instead, he took the animal's head and paws, along with a small portion of the meat, leaving the carcass to rot.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Red Lake Department of Public Safety, the Red Lake Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, conducted the investigation.



Stimac with bear posted on Facebook

Guilty Pleas

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Guilty Pleas

United States v. Cynthia Macias-Martinez, No. 3:20-CR-00353 (N.D. Tex.)
AUSA Douglas B. Brasher.

On September 3, 2020, Cynthia Macia-Martinez pleaded guilty to violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. §§ 703,707). Sentencing is scheduled for January 25, 2021.

Between June 2017 and April 2019, Macias-Martinez, owner of a Dallas mystic shop, sold dried hummingbird carcasses known as “chuparosas” without a valid permit or authorization.

Some believe “chuparosas” impart mystical benefits and use them as amulets or charms. Hummingbirds are protected by the MBTA. The defendant acquired carcasses illegally imported and smuggled into the United States from Mexico.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigations, and Homeland Security Investigations conducted the investigation.



“Chuparosas” seized from defendant

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Guilty Pleas

***United States v. Jeffrey Styron*, No. 4:20-CR-00070 (E.D.N.C.), ECS Trial Attorney Gary Donner and AUSA Banu Rangarajan.**

On September 3, 2020, Jeffrey Styron pleaded guilty to violating the false records provision of the Lacey Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 3372(d), 3373(d)(3)(A)).

Styron, the owner/operator of Garland Fulcher Seafood, Inc., admitted to his role in substituting foreign crabmeat for domestically harvested blue crab, and falsely labeling the foreign crabmeat as “Product of USA.” Sentencing is scheduled for December 7, 2020.

Between January 2014 through December 2017, Styron caused the company to purchase crabmeat from foreign sources. He directed company employees to re-pack the foreign crabmeat into containers labeled “Product of USA,” which Styron and the company then sold to customers. Styron admitted to falsely labeling crabmeat with a retail market value of at least \$250,000 dollars, that his company then sold primarily to small seafood retailers and restaurants.

This case was part of an ongoing effort by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Law Enforcement, in coordination with the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Justice to detect, deter, and prosecute those engaged in falsely labeling crabmeat.

***United States v. Joon LLC*, No. 3:20-CR-00093 (M.D. Ala.), ECS Trial Attorney Erica Pencak, and AUSA Ben Baxley.**

On September 2, 2020, Joon LLC, d/b/a Ajin USA (Ajin) Ajin, pleaded guilty to a willful violation of an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act standard resulting in the death of an employee.

Employee Regina Elsea worked at Ajin’s Cusseta, Alabama, facility. On June 18, 2016, the 20-year-old entered an enclosure (called a “cell”) that contains several robots and other pieces of machinery. While troubleshooting a sensor fault inside the cell, one of the machines started up. A robotic arm struck Elsea, who later died of her injuries. The OSH Act requires employers to develop and utilize procedures to de-energize machinery during maintenance and servicing activities to prevent the kind of unplanned startup that killed Elsea. Ajin developed these procedures, but supervisors failed to effectively enforce them for at least a two-year period. The company’s safety and HR managers repeatedly raised concerns to upper management about these failures, but management failed to take any meaningful steps to rectify them.

The U.S. Department Of Labor Office of Investigations conducted the investigation.

Guilty Pleas

***United States v. Khiem Dinh Vu*, No. 20-CR-00082 (S.D. Miss.), AUSA Gaines Cleveland.**

On September 2, 2020, Khiem Dinh Vu, an unlicensed wholesale seafood dealer operating a business known as “Gulf Coast Seafood,” pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act (18 U.S.C. § 371; 16 U.S.C. §§ 3372(a)(2)(A), 3373(d)(1)). Sentencing is scheduled for December 3, 2020.

Between August and September 2016, Vu sold illegally harvested fish to seafood markets in the Atlanta, Georgia, metropolitan area. Vu bought the seafood from commercial fishermen and other seafood dealers in Mississippi, and transported the seafood to the Atlanta area for resale without a wholesale seafood dealer license, as required by Mississippi law.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Law Enforcement and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources conducted the investigation.

***United States v. Marc A. Victoriano*, No. 20-CR-00018 (E.D. La.), AUSA Julia Evans.**

On September 2, 2020, Marc A. Victoriano pleaded guilty to theft concerning programs receiving federal funds (18 U.S.C. § 666(a)(1)(A)). He is scheduled for sentencing on December 16, 2020.

Between 2015 to 2017, Victoriano and his company, Professional Safety Consultants, LLC, (PSC) provided asbestos inspections for the Terrebonne Parish School Board (TPSB) as mandated under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA). Victoriano submitted 56 invoices to TPSB with fraudulent asbestos laboratory reports, including false air monitoring and asbestos testing reports. Victoriano also submitted nine invoices to TPSB for AHERA reports containing forged signatures and accreditation information. As a result, TPSB paid Victoriano approximately \$212,618.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigation Division, the Louisiana State Police, and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, conducted the investigation. All belong to the Louisiana Environmental Crimes Task Force.

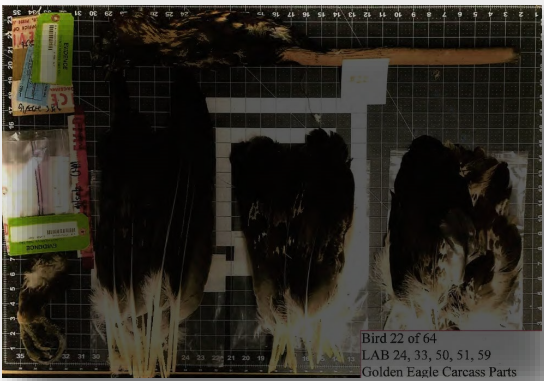
Sentencings

United States v. Troy Fairbanks et al., No. 5:17-CR-50036 (D.S.D.), AUSAs Eric Kelderman and Meghan Dilges.

On September 30, 2020, a court sentenced Troy Fairbanks to complete a five-year term of probation and pay \$15,816 in restitution to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, as a result of his wildlife trafficking activities. Fairbanks’ actions resulted in the death of at least 64 eagles.

Between July 2014, and February 2016, Troy Fairbanks conspired with his sons, Troy Young Fairbanks, and Majestic Fairbanks, to traffic in wildlife parts (specifically, bald and golden eagles, various species of hawks, and other bird species). The elder Fairbanks owned and operated Buffalo Dreamers, a Native American dance business. Fairbanks sold and traded hundreds of eagle feathers, as well as eagle wings, eagle heads, eagle claws, raptor claws, and hawk feathers. His sons pleaded guilty to violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C § 668(d)). Troy Fairbanks pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act (18 U.S.C. § 371). The court sentenced the sons earlier this year to time served.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted the investigation.



Head, talon, and wing feathers of a golden eagle

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Sentencings

***United States v. Shawn Williams et al.*, No. 3:19-CR-005364 (W.D. Wash.), AUSAs Seth Wilkinson and William Dreher.**

On September 21, 2020, the court sentenced Shawn Williams to 30 months' incarceration, followed by three years' supervised release, and ordered him to pay \$4,276,483 in restitution: \$2,512,444 to the U.S. Forestry Service and \$1,764,039 to the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Williams previously pleaded guilty to theft of public property and setting timber afire (18 U.S.C. §§ 641, 1855).

Between April and August 2018, Williams and co-defendant Justin A. Wilke chopped down and sold big leaf maple trees in the Olympic National Forest (Forest). They started a forest fire in August 2018, when they set fire to a bee's nest in a tree they attempted to harvest from the Forest. The resulting fire (known as "The Maple Fire") burned more than 3,300 acres at a cost of approximately \$4.5 million to contain.

Wilke and Williams entered the Forest in April 2018 to scout for big leaf maple trees that might contain 'figured wood' (wood that is highly prized for musical instruments). They sold blocks of lumber from the trees they cut to a mill in Tumwater, Washington. They presented the mill owner with falsified permits claiming the maple had been harvested on private land.

In early August 2018, after selling thousands of dollars' worth of maple to the mill, the defendants identified a tree they wanted to steal. A large bee's nest made it difficult to fell. After unsuccessfully attempting to remove the bees with wasp killer, they decided to burn the nest. Wilke poured gasoline on the nest and lit it on fire. The men tried to put the fire out with water bottles, but were unsuccessful.

Prosecutors charged Wilke with conspiracy, depredation of public property, theft of public property, trafficking in unlawfully harvested timber, attempted trafficking in unlawfully harvested timber, setting timber afire, and using fire in furtherance of a felony (18 U.S.C. §§ 371, 641, 1361 1855, 844(h)(1); 16 U.S.C. §§ 3372 (a)(1), 3373(d). Wilke is scheduled for trial to begin on February 2, 2021.

The United States Forest Service conducted the investigation.



The Maple Fire

The U.S. Forest Service conducted the investigation, with assistance from Homeland Security Investigations and Enforcement and Removal Operations, the Campaign Against Marijuana Planting, the California National Guard, and the Fresno Sheriff's Office.

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Sentencings

***United States v. Tina Imes et al.*, Nos. 2:19-CR-00060, 00210; 2:18-CR-00111 (S.D. Ohio), AUSAs Michael Marous and Jonathan Grey.**

On September 11, 2020, the court sentenced Tina Imes to 36 months' incarceration for conspiring with her husband (James Imes) and others, to operate a chop shop, which also caused the release of refrigerants from air conditioning systems (18 U.S.C. §§ 371, 2322; 42 U.S.C. § 7413(c)(1)). The defendants stole approximately 35 vehicles, earning more than half a million dollars from selling their parts.

Between January 2013 and April 2014, Tina and James Imes, Scottie Johnson, and others operated chop shops in three different locations in Columbus, Ohio. They earned approximately \$10,000 to \$15,000 per week trafficking in car parts, after removing or altering vehicle identification numbers (VINs), and releasing refrigerants after severing air conditioning tubes.

James Imes kept two vehicles for personal use, and sold the rest as parts or scrap to salvage yards. He advertised the more valuable car parts on Craigslist in cities across Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Michigan and West Virginia. Authorities valued eight of the motor vehicles stolen by Johnson and/or others between February 2014 and April 2014 at close to \$264,000. Imes pleaded guilty to operating a chop shop, altering or removing VINs, trafficking in motor vehicle parts with altered VINs, and violating the Clean Air Act (CAA) (18 U.S.C. §§ 511, 2321, 2332(b); 42 U.S.C. § 7413(c)(1)). Johnson pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the CAA and to operating a chop shop (18 U.S.C. §§ 371, 2322; 42 U.S.C. § 7413(c)(1)).

The court sentenced Johnson to complete a three-year term of probation, to include six months' home detention. He will perform 300 hours of community service and pay \$263,895 in restitution divided among several entities, primarily insurance companies. The court further ordered Johnson jointly and severally responsible with James Imes for a portion of the restitution. Imes was sentenced in July 2019 to 120 months' incarceration, followed by three years' supervised release. He was ordered to pay a total of \$550,000 in restitution.

The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Special Investigations Unit conducted the investigation, with assistance from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, the Columbus Division of Police Auto Theft Unit, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol Theft and Fraud Unit.

Sentencings

***United States v. Akbar Akram*, No. 5:19-CR-00530 (M.D. Fla.), ECS Trial Attorney Gary Donner and AUSA Colin McDonell.**

On September 11, 2020, a court sentenced Akbar Akram to 90 days' home confinement, followed by four years' probation, during which he must complete a total of 288 hours of community service (six hours per month over four years). Akram previously pleaded guilty to violating the Lacey Act for illegally trafficking live water monitor lizards from the Philippines (16 U.S.C. §§ 3372(a), 3373(d)(1)(B)).

Akram illegally imported more than 20 live water monitor lizards from the Philippines between January and December 2016. To avoid detection by United States customs authorities, co-defendants placed the lizards in socks sealed with tape, and concealed them in the back panels of audio speakers or other electronic equipment. They shipped the equipment via commercial carriers to Akram's associate, who resided in Massachusetts. The customs declarations accompanying the shipments identified the contents as audio speakers or similar electronics. After receiving the reptiles, Akram sold some to customers in Massachusetts, Colorado and Connecticut.

Operation Sounds of Silence is an ongoing effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in coordination with the Department of Justice, to prosecute those involved in the illegal taking and trafficking in protected species, including water monitor lizards.

***United States v. Mohamed Salem, et al.*, No. 1:18-CR-00758 (N.D. Ohio), AUSAs Duncan Brown and Brad Beeson.**

On September 8, 2020, the court sentenced Mohamed Salem to pay a \$10,000 fine, and complete a two-year term of probation, to include four months' home confinement. The court previously sentenced his father, Amin, to 33 months' incarceration, followed by three years' supervised release. Both Salems will forfeit two properties as part of their sentences. Zahran Al-Qadan will complete a two-year term of probation, to include four months' home confinement, and pay a \$4,000 fine.

Mohamed Salem, Amin Salem, and Al-Qadan previously pleaded guilty to violations stemming from a complex scheme whereby they sold meat from illegally slaughtered goats and lambs, violating the Clean Water Act and a number of other statutes.

The Salems and Al-Qadan owned several gas stations. Mohamed Salem managed the gas station's finances of behalf of his father, Amin. Al-Qadan also owned and operated a bakery. Terminals were placed in the gas stations and bakery that accepted and processed Electronic Benefits Transaction (EBT) cards as part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). A court previously convicted Amin Salem for food stamp fraud (in October 1992 and July 2005), prohibiting him from owning stores that processed EBT transactions. The Salems used the gas station terminals to process more than \$2.7 million in fraudulent SNAP transactions between 2010 and 2016. They deposited proceeds from the EBT transactions into bank accounts of "Annie's Properties," a company owned by the Salems. Amin Salem used the funds to purchase a farm.

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During 2015 and 2016, the Salems slaughtered and sold lambs and goats at Amin's farm. They allowed customers to pay for the illegally slaughtered and uninspected meat using SNAP cards, which is forbidden under the SNAP regulations. The defendants discharged blood and other fluids from the slaughtered animals (without a permit) into Engle Ditch, which flows into the Black River and eventually Lake Erie. In total, they deposited close to \$700,000 into the gas station accounts, with approximately \$88,000 attributed to the illegal meat sales.

Amin Salem pleaded guilty to conspiracy to launder money, violating the Clean Water Act, and distribution of adulterated meat (18 U.S.C. § 1956(h); 33 U.S.C. § 1319(c) (2)(A)); 21 U.S.C. §§ 610(c), 676(a)). Mohamed Salem pleaded guilty to engaging in real estate transactions using laundered funds and trafficking in counterfeit goods (18 U.S.C §§ 2320(a)(1), 1957). Al-Qadan pleaded guilty to conspiracy to launder money.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigation Division, the Ohio Investigative Unit, the Ohio Department of Taxation, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the Lorain County Sheriff's Office, the Guernsey County Sheriff's Department, the Cleveland Division of Police, the Westlake Police Department, and the Strongsville Police Department, conducted the investigation.

[illegible]

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted the investigation.

[illegible][illegible]

Position	Name	Phone
Chief		
Deputy Chief	Joseph Poux	
Assistant Chief	Thomas Ballantine	
Assistant Chief	Wayne Hettenbach	
Assistant Chief	Lana Pettus	
Assistant Chief	Jennifer Whitfield	
Senior Litigation Counsel	Howard P. Stewart	
Senior Litigation Counsel	Richard Udell	
Senior Counsel for Wildlife	Elinor Colbourn	
Senior Counsel	Kris Dighe	
Senior Trial Attorney	Jennifer Blackwell	
Senior Trial Attorney	Christopher Costantini	
Senior Trial Attorney	Daniel Dooher	
Senior Trial Attorney	Todd Gleason	
Senior Trial Attorney	Jeremy Korzenik	
Senior Trial Attorney	Ken Nelson	
Trial Attorney	Cassandra Barnum	
Trial Attorney	Mary Dee Carraway	
Trial Attorney	Ryan Connors	
Trial Attorney	Adam Cullman	
Trial Attorney	Stephen DaPonte	
Trial Attorney	Gary Donner	
Trial Attorney	Patrick Duggan	
Trial Attorney	Ethan Eddy	
Trial Attorney	Matthew Evans	
Trial Attorney	Stephen Foster	
Trial Attorney	Christopher Hale	
Trial Attorney	Joel LaBissonniere	
Trial Attorney	Samuel (Charlie) Lord	
Trial Attorney	Shennie Patel	
Trial Attorney	Erica Pencak	
Trial Attorney	Richard Powers	
Trial Attorney	Leigh Rende	
Trial Attorney	Lauren Steele	