



U. S. Department of Justice

*Lawrence Keefe
United States Attorney
Northern District of Florida*

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For more information, contact:
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Florida
(850) 216-3829
USAFLN.Press@usdoj.gov

THREE DEFENDANTS TRIED AND FOUR DEFENDANTS SENTENCED FOR CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT WIRE FRAUD AND THEFT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA – With the trial of three defendants last week and the sentencing of four defendants yesterday, federal prosecutors are close to finishing their work in bringing to justice dozens of current and former federal, state, and local officials and prominent business people all connected in a scheme to defraud the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Lawrence Keefe, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, announced the outcomes of the recent trial and sentencing hearings.

In November 2019, a federal grand jury returned a far-reaching indictment charging a County Executive Director of the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency with orchestrating a broad-based conspiracy to steal government drought assistance funds and hide the actions through identify theft, tax evasion, and other federal crimes. As a result of this crackdown by U.S. Attorney Keefe's enhanced Public Trust Unit, 29 individuals were indicted; alleged to have defrauded the federal government, and taxpayers, of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Duane Edward Crawson, 43, of Bonifay, Florida, led the conspiracy that included a former Holmes County Clerk of Court and numerous other individuals who had served in positions of public trust. Between May and December of 2017, while employed as a County Executive Director of the USDA's Farm Service Agency for Bay, Holmes, and Washington counties, Crawson devised a kickback scheme in which he and his co-conspirators unlawfully obtained approximately \$400,534 in taxpayer funds by submitting fraudulent drought assistance claims.

Crawson submitted fraudulent claims for livestock and farmland parcels that were not actually owned or leased by the conspirators, resulting in drought assistance funds being deposited into the conspirators' bank accounts. The co-conspirators paid Crawson a portion of the fraud proceeds in the form of cash kickbacks.

On October 23, 2020, a federal trial jury found Danyel Witt guilty of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, theft of government funds and aggravated identity theft. The same jury returned a not-

guilty verdict as to Jeremiah Rolling and Justin Chopelas on charges of conspiracy and theft of government funds. Witt's sentencing hearing is scheduled for January 21, 2021.

Each of the remaining 26 defendants pled guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and theft of government funds. Sentencing hearings were conducted yesterday for Crawson along with co-conspirators James Stacey Paul, Davey Eugene Mancill, and Ronald Ryan Roof. Sentences for all 26 are:

- Duane Edward Crawson, of Bonifay, Florida, 36 months in federal prison;
- Davey Eugene Mancill, of Westville, Florida, 24 months in federal prison;
- James Stacey Paul, of Bonifay, Florida, 18 months in federal prison;
- Jordan Ryan Hicks, of Ponce De Leon, Florida, 15 months in federal prison;
- Kyle Martin Hudson, of Westville, Florida, 12 months and 1 day in federal prison;
- Dwayne Frazier White, of Bonifay, Florida, 12 days in federal prison, 4 years of probation;
- Ronald Ryan Roof, X, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Christopher Marion Ammons, of Ponce De Leon, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Sheryl Day Gillman, of Bonifay, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Shyloe Rose Sachse, of Bonifay, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Tillman Douglas Mears, of Bonifay, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Dawn Marie Crutchfield, of Bonifay Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Megan Leann Roof, of Westville, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Billy Coal Bradshaw, of Bonifay, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- James Erwin Mancill, of Bonifay, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Joseph Matthew Crowder, of Caryville, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Audrey Lynn Smith, of Caryville, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Brian Anthony Ammons, of Ponce De Leon, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Taylor Ward Stripling, of Westville, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Dawn Marie Roof, of Chipley, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Daniel Olajuwon Boston, of Chipley, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Chassity Lynn Lee, of Bonifay, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Jennifer Marie McCabe, of Bonifay, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Justina Rae Williams, of Caryville, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Joseph Bailey Alexander, of Chipley, Florida, 4 years of probation;
- Douglas Edward Mixon, of Westville, Florida, 2 years of probation

In addition to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and theft of government funds, Crawson, Davey Mancill, and Paul pled guilty to aggravated identity theft. Crawson also pled guilty to tax evasion, as well as obstruction of the internal revenue laws.

As a part of their sentence, each defendant has been ordered to pay restitution in the amount of their fraudulent claims. To date the government has received in excess of \$120,000 of the \$400,534 fraudulently obtained as a part of the kickback scheme.

This case resulted from a 20-month investigation conducted by a partnership of law enforcement agencies and prosecutors at all levels of government, including the United States Department of Agriculture-Office of Inspector General and the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations. Assistant United States Attorney Jason R. Coody is prosecuting the case.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](#) website. For more information about the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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