



U. S. Department of Justice

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FARM SERVICE AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FORMER CLERK OF COURT, AND 27 OTHERS INDICTED FOR CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT WIRE FRAUD AND THEFT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS

PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA – A federal grand jury in Tallahassee has returned a far-reaching indictment that unveils a criminal network of 29 people who actively worked to defraud the federal government and taxpayers of hundreds of thousands of dollars. At the helm of the scheme, a County Executive Director of the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency is charged 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 with a criminal network of more than two dozen other people.

The indictment, announced today by Lawrence Keefe, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Florida as part of a crackdown by his office's enhanced Public Trust Unit, produced a sweeping roundup of 29 current and former federal, state, and local officials and local business people all connected in the scheme to defraud the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The indictment alleges that Farm Service Agency director Duane Edward Crawson, 43, 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 and others in a variety of occupations. Charges include conspiracy to commit wire fraud, theft of government funds, aggravated identity theft, income tax evasion, and obstruction of Internal Revenue laws.

"These individuals betrayed their duty as public servants and as citizens in a shallow but breathtakingly bold effort to lie, cheat, and steal from their fellow citizens and our federal government," said Keefe. "This pattern of shameless criminality strikes at the very heart of our system of self-government and undermines public trust in the integrity of our basic institutions. The United States Attorney's Office and all our law enforcement partners will be relentless in pursuing and prosecuting all such violations of public trust."

The indictment alleges that between May and December 2017, Crawson -- while employed as the County Executive Director of the USDA's Farm Service Agency for Bay, Holmes, and Washington counties in Florida -- devised a kickback scheme in which he and his co-

conspirators unlawfully obtained approximately \$373,483 in taxpayer funds by submitting fraudulent drought assistance claims.

Crawson is alleged to have 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 are alleged to have paid Crawson a portion of the fraud proceeds in the form of cash kickbacks.

The defendants' trial is scheduled for January 6, 2020, at 8:00 a.m. at the United States Courthouse in Pensacola, Florida.

Each defendant faces the following potential penalties:

- Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud: a maximum of 20 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.
- Theft of Government Funds: a maximum of 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

Besides Crawson, the defendants are:

- Jeremiah Joe Rolling, 43, of Westville, Florida;
Investigator – Office of the State Public Defender
- Jordan Ryan Hicks, 36, of Ponce De Leon, Florida;
Former Florida Department of Corrections Officer
- Davey Eugene Mancill, 44, of Westville, Florida;
Mancill Masonry, LLC
- James Stacey Paul, 46, of Bonifay, Florida;
Public Works - City of Bonifay, Florida
- Kyle Martin Hudson, 39, of Westville, Florida;
Former Holmes County Clerk of Court
- Christopher Marion Ammons, 31, of Ponce De Leon, Florida;
Heavy Equipment Operator
- Danyel Michelle Witt, 44, of Bonifay, Florida;
Clerk – United States Postal Service
- Sheryl Day Gillman, 52, of Bonifay, Florida;
Secretary - Florida Farm Bureau
- Shyloe Rose Sachse, 40, of Bonifay, Florida;
Former Corrections Officer
- Tillman Douglas Mears, 30, of Bonifay, Florida;
Public Works - City of Bonifay, Florida

- Dawn Marie Crutchfield, 48, of Bonifay, Florida;
Medical Assitant
- Justin Mikel Chopelas, 21, of Fayetteville, North Carolina;
Construction
- Ronald Ryan Roof, 23, of Westville, Florida;
Specialist – Army National Guard
- Megan Leann Roof, 22, of Caryville, Florida;
Hotel Clerk
- Billy Coal Bradshaw, 35, of Bonifay, Florida;
Auto Parts Employee
- James Erwin Mancill, 48, of Bonifay, Florida;
Auto Parts Employee
- Joseph Matthew Crowder, 47, of Caryville, Florida;
Brick Mason – Mancill Masonry, LLC
- Audrey Lynn Smith, 32, of Caryville, Florida;
Convenience Store Clerk
- Brian Anthony Ammons, 44, of Ponce De Leon, Florida;
Heavy Equipment Operator
- Taylor Ward Stripling, 28, of Westville, Florida;
Farm Laborer
- Dawn Marie Roof, 44, of Chipley, Florida;
Licensed Practical Nurse
- Daniel Olajuwon Boston, 33, of Chipley, Florida;
Brick Mason – Mancill Masonry, LLC
- Chassity Lynn Lee, 31, of Bonifay, Florida;
Auto Parts Employee
- Jennifer Marie McCabe, 30, of Bonifay, Florida;
Holmes County Council on Aging
- Justina Rae Williams, 30, of Caryville, Florida;
Unemployed

- Joseph Bailey Alexander, 22, of Chipley, Florida;
Poker Dealer
- Douglas Edward Mixon, 60, of Westville, Florida;
Farmer
- Dwayne Frazier White, 49, of Bonifay, Florida
Former City of Bonifay Police Officer

Duane Crawson, Davey Mancill, James Paul, and Danyel Witt face an additional charge of aggravated identity theft, which carries a penalty of a minimum 2 years imprisonment consecutive to any other term of imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. In addition, Crawson also faces charges of income tax evasion, carrying a maximum of 5 years imprisonment and a \$100,000 fine; and obstruction of Internal Revenue laws, carrying a maximum of 3 years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine.

“The Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) was created to help stabilize the U.S. livestock industry and support producers whose grazing lands were significantly damaged by drought. Those involved in fraud and abuse of USDA farm programs will be investigated by our office to the fullest extent. This is particularly applicable for USDA employees who violate the trust vested in them by American taxpayers,” said U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General Special Agent-in-Charge Bethanne M. Dinkins. “In this joint investigation with the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, we worked together to identify those who sought to profit from the LFP through illegal schemes. The USDA Office of Inspector General will continue to dedicate investigative resources and work with our law enforcement partners to protect the integrity of these programs and bring to justice those who commit fraud.”

The indictment culminates 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.

“Those who violate their oaths and abuse positions of trust in our community do so out of greed. IRS Special Agents are uniquely skilled to follow the money trail and bring to light financial transactions conducted in such ways as to stay undetected,” stated Ron Loecker, Assistance Special Agent in Charge for IRS Criminal Investigation’s Tampa Field Office. “IRS is a committed partner of the U.S. Attorney’s Office Public Integrity Unit and we stand ready to ensure our public officials work honestly in communities throughout northern Florida.”

An indictment is merely an allegation by a grand jury that a defendant has committed a violation of federal criminal law and is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the government’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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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