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Three plead guilty in Fruit of the Loom fraud case

Three people pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud Fruit of the Loom through a series of contracts and kickbacks to a former environmental manager for the company.

Laura Leigh Wells, 31, of Lexington, Ronald R. Pollock, 48, of Bowling Green and Tyrone N. Tackett, 35 of Pensacola, Fla., told a court on Monday that they conspired with each other and three other people as part of the scheme. Pollock and Tackett also pleaded guilty to money laundering.

Prosecutors said the trio got contracts from Kalen Watkins, the former environmental manager at Fruit of the Loom, for work that was never performed, then paid kickbacks to Watkins.

Watkins, Curtis Hopkins, 43, of Corbin and Kenneth Scott Harris, 44, of Euless, Texas, are scheduled for trial on April 23.

Watkins faces a charge of obstruction of justice for allegedly fabricating documents after a grand jury issued a subpoena in the case, prosecutors said. Hopkins also faces a charge of obstruction of justice. Prosecutors said he attempted to persuade a witness to provide inaccurate information to an FBI agent. Harris is charged with mail fraud.

Wells, Pollock and Tackett have agreed to testify against Watkins, Harris and Hopkins.

In a lawsuit, Bowling Green-based Fruit of the Loom accused Watkins of paying more than \$1.7 million to companies run by Wells and Harris for little work.

Watkins served as environmental manager for Fruit of the Loom from February 1997 until September 2003. The company said in the lawsuit that Watkins was fired for misconduct related to conflicts of interest and violating company policies related to business ethics.