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Former executive pleads guilty to conspiracy, money laundering

The Associated Press

A Bowling Green man who was environmental director for Fruit of the Loom in Bowling Green pleaded guilty to conspiracy to defraud the company and two counts of money laundering, a federal prosecutor said Tuesday.

Kalen W. Watkins, 45, still faces two counts of money laundering and one of obstructing justice by creating false documents in response to a grand jury subpoena, U.S. Attorney David L. Huber said in a statement.

Prosecutors say the loss to Fruit of the Loom amounted to about \$1 million.

Watkins and co-defendants Kenneth Scott Harris, 44, of Euless, Texas, and Curtis Hopkins, 43, of Corbin, will be tried in that case on Aug. 27, the prosecutor said. Harris is charged with conspiracy to defraud Fruit of the Loom, and Hopkins is charged with conspiracy to defraud the company, money laundering and obstruction of justice. He allegedly attempted to persuade a witness to mislead law enforcement officers, Huber said.

Huber said Watkins admitted coming up with a scheme to defraud the company by hiring companies to perform services for Fruit of the Loom and approving fraudulent invoices. He was the company's environmental director from 1998 to 2003.

Earlier this month, Laura Leigh Wells, 31, of Lexington; Ronald R. Pollock, 48, of Bowling Green; and Tyrone N. Tackett, 35, of Pensacola, Fla., pleaded guilty to conspiracy as part of the scheme. Pollock and Tackett also pleaded guilty to money laundering.

Prosecutors said the three got contracts from Watkins for work that was never performed, then paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in kickbacks to him.