

Southwest Washington Man Who Led Police on High-Speed Chase, Tossing Kilo Bags in River, Convicted

Local News

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KELSO, Wash. - A Southwest Washington man with three prior drug distribution convictions was convicted by a jury in U.S. District Court in Tacoma last week following a six-day jury trial. Steven McCracken, 32, of Kelso, Washington, and Jesus Ramirez-Lucio, 32, of Washougal, Washington, both face a mandatory minimum 10 years in prison when sentenced for conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. Ramirez-Lucio was also convicted of distribution of methamphetamine, and McCracken was convicted of possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute. The men were involved in a three pound methamphetamine deal in March 2011. U.S. District Judge Ronald B. Leighton scheduled sentencing for January 18, 2013. According to records filed in the case and testimony at trial, a person working with police alerted members of the Clark-Skamania Drug Task Force that McCracken and Ramirez-Lucio were planning the drug deal. The men met at a Kelso, Washington home on March 25, 2011, where McCracken paid Ramirez-Lucio more than \$34,000 for three pounds of methamphetamine. After the drug deal, both men were followed by law enforcement as they left the house. Police pulled McCracken over on I-5. As the law enforcement officer approached the driver's window, McCracken pulled out into traffic, leading police on a chase at speeds up to 90 MPH. On the Route 432 bridge, McCracken pulled to the side of the road, left the car running, and threw bags of methamphetamine into the Cowlitz River. McCracken was arrested, and other officers retrieved the bags of meth floating in the river. Some of the meth was damaged, but one of the bags was intact. Ramirez-Lucio was arrested as he traveled back to Vancouver with more than \$34,000 in cash in a shopping bag in his car.

McCracken has been convicted three prior times in state court for distributing methamphetamine: Cowlitz County Superior Court, 1999; Clark County Superior Court, 2002; and Josephine County Circuit Court (Oregon) 2006. The case was investigated by the FBI's Safe Streets Task Force, which includes officers from the FBI; the Vancouver Police Department; the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Narcotics Task Force, which includes officers from the Kelso Police Department and the Cowlitz County Sheriff's Office, among others; and the Clark Vancouver Regional Drug Task Force. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Brian Werner and Michael Lang. Press contact for the U.S. Attorney's Office is Emily Langlie (206) 553-4110 or Emily.Langlie@usdoj.gov.