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## Country band Sugarland settles lawsuit by group's founder claiming she was owed more than \$14M

By **GREG BLUESTEIN** , Associated Press

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ATLANTA - The two members of the country duo Sugarland avoided a nasty public trial with the group's founding member, settling a lawsuit over claims that she was owed an estimated \$14 million of the band's profits after she left to pursue a solo career five years ago.

Sugarland, which last week was named the Country Music Association's vocal duo of the year, was set to go to trial Monday with founding member Kristen Hall over claims she was owed one-third of the band's profits even though she quit the band in December 2005.

U.S. District Judge Timothy Batten signed a court order Friday saying the parties reached a settlement. Terms of the agreement were not disclosed, but Batten gave both sides until Dec. 13 to complete the agreement. Attorneys for the parties could not immediately be reached for comment.

Hall sued Jennifer Nettles and Kristian Bush in 2008, claiming that she should have been given a third of the group's profits — a sum her lawyers said could exceed \$14 million.

The complaint said Hall, who founded the band in 2002, set the stage for the group's success by acting as its manager, marketing officer and tour organizer in its early years. It said she used her personal credit cards to pay for the band's expenses, and that she "collaborated generously" on the debut album, which sold millions of copies.

Nettles and Bush countered in court documents that Hall never reached a profit-sharing agreement with them when she quit. They said they were left to repay almost \$100,000 in debts after Hall left, and that she had "no expectation that the parties would ever work together again."

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