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OREGONIAN PARTICIPATES IN WHITE HOUSE RURAL CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA

PORTLAND, Ore. - *July 7, 2011* - Yesterday, Deborah Kane, Vice President for Food & Farms at [Ecotrust](#), was at the White House for a meeting she was asked to participate in with President Obama, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, the President's Domestic Policy Adviser Melody Barnes and leaders from rural communities across the country for the White House Rural Champions of Change event.

“Meeting the President was thrilling, but equally thrilling is that this Administration has clearly prioritized ensuring reliable prosperity in rural America. At the roundtable discussion I shared feedback from farmers and agricultural producers throughout the Northwest related to the need for infrastructure, better access to credit, and support for ecosystem service markets. I also discussed recent research that shows a small investment in school food can have tremendous economic impact in agricultural communities. The President talked a lot about innovation; I was honored to share that innovation is certainly alive and well in the Northwest.” So says Deborah... or something along these lines.

Kane is one of 17 people from across the country who were invited to share their ideas directly with the Obama Administration about how to strengthen rural communities and promote economic growth.

Kane was selected because of her leadership and success with innovative projects that are supporting Oregon agriculture while bringing healthy, local food to school cafeterias throughout the state. In 2003 Deborah was named one of "50 Great Leaders for Oregon" by Oregon Business Magazine and appointed by Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski to the Oregon Sustainability Board, where she served one term. Deborah has also served as a WK Kellogg Foundation national Food & Society Policy Fellow and, among many other achievements and accolades, in 2010 she was named one of the “10 Most Inspiring People in Sustainable Food” by Fast Company Magazine for her innovative work with [FoodHub](#), a dynamic online marketplace that connects regional food buyers and sellers.

Kane’s current project, FoodHub, is helping develop regional food systems and opening doors for rural farmers and ranchers to connect with metro-area restaurants and other wholesale food buyers. Leveraging technology to expand agricultural markets close to home is a great example of the type of innovations the Rural Council is seeking to replicate.

This week the White House Champions of Change focus is on farmers, ranchers and rural residents who are making a positive impact in their communities. Champions of Change is a White House initiative that recognizes ordinary Americans who are accomplishing extraordinary things in their communities to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world. The administration acknowledges that the best ideas come directly from the American people, and on a weekly basis a Champions of Change roundtable is held to spotlight some of the top ideas that are making change a reality across the country.

Yesterday's event is part of a series of meetings that are being held across the country this summer as part of the White House Rural Council (WHRC) and the White House Business Council to coordinate programs across government and encourage public-private partnerships to improve economic conditions, quality of life and create jobs in rural communities.

In June, President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing the first WHRC chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. The Council will provide recommendations for investment in rural areas and will coordinate Federal engagement with a variety of rural stakeholders, including agricultural organizations, small businesses, and state, local, and tribal governments.

Since taking office, President Obama's Administration has taken significant steps to improve the lives of rural Americans and has provided broad support for rural communities. The Obama Administration has set goals of modernizing infrastructure by providing broadband access to 10 million Americans, expanding educational opportunities for students in rural areas, and providing affordable health care. In the long term, these unparalleled rural investments will help ensure that America's rural communities are repopulating, self-sustaining, and thriving economically.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$150 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

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