

# Capitol Hill Ocean Week Hill Day Toolkit



Capitol Hill  
Ocean Week

FROM NATIONAL MARINE  
SANCTUARY FOUNDATION



National  
Marine Sanctuary  
Foundation

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Welcome Hill Day Participants,

On Tuesday, June 6th, 2023, Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) will provide the opportunity to elevate ocean and Great Lakes policy issues with Members of Congress and their staff during CHOW Hill Day. CHOW Hill Day will give you the opportunity to meet with your elected officials to discuss critical policy issues affecting conservation, science, and technology.

Past CHOW Hill Days have paved the way for hundreds of champions to take to the halls of Congress and voice their support for our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. Members of Congress have introduced new legislation to conserve our waters, from coral conservation to combating marine debris to saving endangered whales. We are excited to be back in person for our CHOW 2023 Hill Day!

In addition to Hill meetings, CHOW 2023 Hill Day will feature the following unique opportunities for attendees to engage with key decision-makers:

- Coastal Coffee offers CHOW attendees a policy perk up before their Hill visits and will feature Member remarks and a discussion with community leaders on co-developing Indigenous knowledge and wisdom to better manage marine protected areas and address climate impacts;
- A lunch briefing focusing on marine carbon dioxide removal, featuring current ocean leaders, tailored to an audience of Congressional staffers, to discuss ocean issues that need policy action; and
- A Hill Day Closing Reception to network and connect with Members of Congress, Hill staff, Administration officials, scientists, business and industry executives, and other ocean leaders.

CHOW Hill Day provides a national platform for you to engage with elected leaders, moving beyond conversation to increase ocean policy outcomes. Join us in support of a healthy ocean and Great Lakes as we bring CHOW to Capitol Hill! This packet is designed to assist you as you prepare for and attend meetings with your elected officials and their staff. Thank you for participating in CHOW 2023 Hill Day.

Sincerely,

*Shannon Colbert*

Vice President of External Affairs  
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation



## How to Set Up and Prepare for a Meeting with your Members of Congress

Engaging face-to-face with government officials and their staff is the single most powerful advocacy strategy you can pursue. Here we outline the steps for a successful meeting with Members of Congress.

### Step 1: Find Your Members of Congress

Members of Congress find it most helpful to hear from their direct constituents, the people who live in the state/districts they represent. However, if you represent people who live in a Member's state/district, you can meet with the Member to provide helpful information on behalf of the people you represent.

[Find your U.S. Senators](#) based on your state.

[Find your U.S. Representative](#) based on your zip code.

### Step 2: Request a Meeting

To set up a meeting with a Member of Congress, ask for the scheduler at the Member's office. The following websites provide contact information for Members' offices in Washington, D.C.

[Senate office directory](#)

[House office directory](#)

When you contact a Member's office via email or phone, indicate that you are a constituent if you live in an area that the member represents and mention the topic you want to discuss.

#### **Meeting request email template:**

Dear *[Name of Scheduler]*,

As a constituent of *[State and Number of Congressional District]*, I am interested in meeting with my *[Representative/ Senator name]* on Tuesday, June 6th, 2023, for Capitol Hill Ocean Week's Hill Day.

Ocean and Great Lakes leaders from across the nation are coming to DC for the premier annual ocean policy conference, Capitol Hill Ocean Week to examine marine, coastal, and Great Lakes issues. On June 6th, I will be participating in Hill Day for CHOW 2023, to showcase the importance of conserving ocean resources, considering their value to our communities, environment, and economy to our Members. I would like to take this opportunity to elevate ocean and Great Lakes policy issues with *[name of Representative or Senator]* and senior staff.

Please let me know if *[name of Representative or Senator]* and your senior staff would be available on June 6th for a 30-minute meeting. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to scheduling this at your convenience. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions for me.

Sincerely,  
*Your Name*



If the Members are unavailable, request a meeting with their staff who work on natural resources or ocean/Great Lakes issues. Staffers communicate regularly with their Members and advise and inform them on the specific issues under consideration in Congress, so meeting with staff is very valuable.

### Step 3: Prepare for the Meeting

Before the meeting, think about the key issues and potential actions you want to discuss. Prepare 2-3 key messages so you are ready with clear and articulate statements when your meeting begins.

Research the Member's background, committee assignments, and positions on the issues. All of this information is typically on the Member's website.

Also, ensure you have any materials on hand you would like to leave behind with your Members and their staff, and **bring business cards** to exchange with the staff member you are meeting with.

### Step 4: Meet with your Member and/or Staff

When meeting with your Members, or their staff, follow these tips:

**Tell your personal story:** Sharing why you or the people you represent are personally affected by an issue is a powerful way to advocate and educate members. Stories provide emotional resonance, establish a connection, and help demystify complex topics by illustrating how ocean issues affect real people.

**Offer a thank you:** If the Member has taken actions in the past that have been helpful, thank them and their staff. Acknowledging their history and leadership on the issues, as appropriate, goes a long way.

**Share key points about the issue:** When you meet with your member, share 2-3 top points about the issue. These points should reflect your greatest concerns and provide information that will resonate with your Member based on his or her priorities and goals. Including data to back up your arguments, especially state-specific or local data, will help make your points more compelling.

**Keep the conversation state or district-specific:** Members want to know how the state or district they represent will specifically be affected by issues. Share any information you have on how ocean issues will impact specific population groups and the Blue Economy in your state or community.

### Step 5: Close the Meeting with a Key "Ask"

An effective meeting with a Member of Congress provides the Member with a clear request or action they can take. Examples of requests include:

- voting "yes" or "no" on a piece of legislation;
- introducing legislation on a specific topic;
- co-sponsoring existing legislation.



So, after you present your concerns during the meeting, make a clear “ask” of your Member of Congress. Offer any assistance you can provide to your Member as he or she works to implement your request.

## Step 6: Follow-up after the Meeting

Send an email after the meeting to thank the Member and/or staff for meeting with you. If you discussed resources or information during the meeting that you indicated you would send, do so as soon as possible after the meeting.

### **Thank you email template:**

Dear *[Name of Individual You Met With]*,

**Thank you for *Representative/Senator [insert name]*'s leadership in prioritizing ocean conservation and for taking the time to speak with me on Hill Day for Capitol Hill Ocean Week.**

Your work to support ocean conservation sends a powerful and necessary message about the continuing economic, ecological, and aesthetic value of America's waters – and my organization deeply values your support in helping to make that happen. As your constituent, I appreciate your attention to ocean policy issues and your ongoing efforts to improve the health of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Thank you for your efforts and please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions regarding the topics we discussed.

Sincerely,  
*[Your Name]*

Over the coming weeks, you can follow up regarding progress on the requests you made of the Member and/or staff, staying mindful that members are very busy and field many requests. When you follow up provide any information that you have that may be helpful to addressing your request and offer the Member and staff your assistance gathering information.



## General Tips for Meeting with Members of Congress

- Proper business attire: if you are wearing slacks, a blazer or sports-coat should be worn, wear comfortable shoes for all the walking you will be doing around the Hill.
- Always be considerate of your Member's time constraints and their staff's time. Arrive on time for your meeting. If Members or staff indicate that they only have a set amount of time for a meeting, ensure you end within that time frame.
- Congressional schedules are always changing, so be flexible. You may have a meeting scheduled with a Member, but due to last-minute changes in the schedule, you may find you are meeting with a staffer.
- There's no reason to be nervous when meeting with Members of Congress. They are very interested in hearing directly from their constituents and the people who represent their constituents. Speak naturally and remember that you are an expert on the problems and needs that you and the people you represent experience.
- In many cases, Hill staff are young professionals and are Member's experts and advisors on the issues. Treat everyone with respect.
- When speaking, be courteous and concise.



## Getting To and Around Capitol Hill

**Transportation:** If you are taking public transit, offices on the House-side are best reached by the Capitol South Metro Stop (on the blue, silver, and orange line), and offices on the Senate-side are best reached by the Union Station Metro Stop (red line).

**Security:** Please allow for additional time to go through security. You will need to go through a metal detector and all items are screened by an x-ray device. If you are entering the Capitol Visitor Center, additional security measures are in place, and food or beverages of any kind are not allowed. A full list of prohibited items can be found [here](#).

**Capitol Hill Layout:** The House office buildings are Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn which are on the House side of the Capitol (the south side). The Senate office buildings are Russell, Dirksen, and Hart, which are on the Senate side of the Capitol (the north side). All of the office buildings are connected via underground tunnels. You can use these tunnels to go between buildings on one side or the other (i.e., between House buildings and between Senate buildings). However, due to security reasons, you cannot walk between the House and Senate underground without a staffer. If you need to get from one side to the other, it is best to go outside. It takes about 20 minutes to walk from any of the Senate office buildings to any of the House office buildings and you will need to go through security again, so ensure you are giving yourself sufficient time to get from meeting to meeting.

### Room Numbers:

- In all Senate buildings, the first digit of a room number indicates the floor. (Example: SD 145 is on the first floor of Dirksen).
- Cannon House Office Building rooms have three-digit room numbers, and the first digit indicates the floor. (Example: 327 CHOB is on the third floor of Cannon).
- Longworth House Office Building rooms have four-digit room numbers beginning with "1", and the second digit indicates the floor. (Example: 1223 LHOB is on the second floor of Longworth).
- Rayburn House Office Building rooms have four-digit room numbers beginning with "2", and the second digit indicates the floor. (Example: 2449 RHOB is on the fourth floor of Rayburn).