



Capitol Hill Ocean Week

2026 | FROM NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARY FOUNDATION

CHOW Hill Day

JUNE 4, 2026 WASHINGTON, DC





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Hill Day Toolkit

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Hello CHOW Attendees!

We all have a shared stake in the future of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. Together, we can harness our collective power to urge elected officials to conserve those special places and ensure a better future for generations to come. It will take all of us to shape a sustainable, thriving future for our big blue planet.

On Thursday, June 4th, 2026, CHOW attendees will have the opportunity to elevate ocean and Great Lakes policy issues with members of Congress and their staff during CHOW Hill Day. Congress needs to hear from YOU— use your power as a constituent to raise critical policy issues affecting our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes with your elected officials.

Our goal is to make the biggest splash we can for our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes and the communities that depend on them. That means we encourage you to plan these meetings to fit your schedule. The Foundation will provide all information you need to set up, lead, and relay your constituent meetings.

This toolkit is designed to guide you through planning, preparing, and successfully leading meetings with your members of Congress and their staff. Join the wave of support for a healthy ocean and Great Lakes as we bring CHOW to Capitol Hill!

Best,

Diane Dotson

Policy Team

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation



Using Your Power to Support our Ocean, Coasts, and Great Lakes

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

Engaging with your elected officials and their staff through a constituent meeting is the single most powerful advocacy strategy you can pursue. Here we outline the steps for a successful meeting with members of Congress and their staff.

Step 1: Find Your Members of Congress

Members of Congress answer to the people who live in the state/districts they were elected to represent. It is their job to take time to listen to constituent concerns. You heard that right: constituents (YOU) hold the power! While most offices only take meetings with their constituents, if you (or your organization) represent people who live in a member's state/district, you can meet with that office 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, contact the scheduler in the Member's office. To set up a meeting with a staffer, contact the staff member who works on ocean and coastal issues. The following websites provide contact information for Members' offices in Washington, D.C. You can call the office and ask for the name and email of the proper staffer.

[Senate office directory](#)

[House office directory](#)

***IMPORTANT STEP:** 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 Template (please copy & paste and fill in your information)

Subject: Constituent Meeting Request

Body:

Dear [Staffer Name],

As a constituent, I am interested in meeting with [Representative/Senator name; ex: "Representative Dotson"] on Thursday, June 4th, 2026, for Capitol Hill Ocean Week's Hill Day.

Ocean and Great Lakes leaders from across the nation will be in DC for Capitol Hill Ocean Week, the annual ocean policy conference, to collaborate on marine, coastal, and Great Lakes issues. On June 4th, I will join CHOW Hill Day participants in leading meetings with my members of Congress to share the importance of ocean resources and their value to our communities, environment, heritage, and economy.

Please let me know what time(s) your office is available on June 4th for a meeting. I look forward to meeting with your office on important issues facing the ocean and Great Lakes. Please feel free to reach out if you need additional information.

All the best,

[Your Name]

Email

Address or zip code if you are a constituent

*It is likely that you will be meeting with a staff member who works on natural resources or ocean/Great Lakes issues for the office rather than the actual member of Congress. This is a good thing! Often, staffers are more knowledgeable on specific issues than their bosses and they inform and advise them on specific issues under consideration in Congress. Meeting with staff is extremely beneficial for our work.

Step 3: Prepare For the Meeting

This toolkit is full of helpful information to help you advocate for the ocean and Great Lakes. Review the factsheets and other information and highlight the talking points you find most important for each meeting. Don't worry about mentioning every bit of background information – focus on 2-3 talking points to help explain why your members of Congress should prioritize ocean and Great Lakes conservation through funding and policy.

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

*Important: Ensure you have any materials on hand to leave behind (or email) for the offices, find those resources [here](#). Feel free to **bring business cards** to exchange with the staffer you are meeting with if you are meeting in-person.



[You can find additional resources](#) within the google folder to help you with your meeting.

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. Personal 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 issues impacting the ocean and Great Lakes goes a long way.

Need a specific thank you or ask? Check the [national marine sanctuary caucus webpage](#) to see if your representative is listed. If they are, thank them for being a leader! If they are not, encourage them to join the caucus. The National Marine Sanctuary Caucus is led by Reps. Jared Huffman (D-CA-2) and Jack Bergman (R-MI-01).

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 their priorities and goals and the area they represent. Including data, anecdotes, articles, or photos to back up your arguments, especially state-specific or local, 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 and Great Lakes issues will impact specific communities and the economy in your state or community.

Step 5: Close the Meeting with a Key “Ask”

An effective meeting with a congressional office will provide the member with a clear request or action they can take. Take this opportunity to talk to your members about the specific ocean and Great Lakes issues that matter to you. Examples of requests include:

- voting “yes” or “no” on a piece of legislation;
- introducing legislation on a specific topic;
- co-sponsoring existing legislation;
- supporting funding for a program;
- joining the national marine sanctuary caucus and the ocean caucus.

It is ESSENTIAL to make a clear “ask” of your member of Congress. Offer any assistance you can provide your member as they work to implement your request. Feel free to mention the ask(s) more than once and give time for the office to respond after the 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 including any leave-behind resources if you have not already. Follow-up on any discussed resources or information that came up during the meeting.

Thank you email template:

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

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about the importance of ocean and Great Lakes conservation to our community and state. I appreciate *[Representative/Senator NAME]*'s leadership in prioritizing ocean conservation and communities through funding and policy.

Your work to support these communities sends a powerful and necessary message about the environmental, economic, and cultural importance of America's waters. As your constituent, I appreciate your attention to these issues and your ongoing efforts to improve the health of our ocean and Great Lakes communities.

I look forward to seeing *[Representative/Senator NAME]*'s support for *[insert specific ask; or use: ocean and Great Lakes conservation]* and meeting with your office again in the future.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

Optional: Over the coming weeks, you can follow-up regarding progress on the requests you made of the member and/or staff, staying mindful that congressional offices are very busy and field many requests. When following up, provide any relevant or new information that you have that may be helpful to bolstering your request, including news articles!

General Tips for Meeting with Members of Congress

- Be considerate of the offices' time constraints. Arrive on time for your meeting. If staff indicate that they only have a set amount of time for a meeting, ensure you end within that time frame.
- Be flexible, congressional schedules are always changing. You may have a meeting scheduled with the office, but due to last-minute changes in the schedule, you may find you are meeting with a different staffer.
- No need to be nervous when meeting with members of Congress or their staff. It is their job to hear from their constituents and the people who represent their constituents. Speak naturally and remember that you are an expert on your experience, your community, and why you care.
- Treat everyone with respect. In many cases, congressional staff are overworked, young professionals that serve as experts and advisors on issues for their offices.



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- Be courteous and concise when speaking.

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. Depending on the time of day, there may also be a line. We suggest allowing at least 30 minutes buffer time before meetings for security and navigation. 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*).

Please email ddotson@marinesanctuary.com with any follow-up questions or concerns. Our policy team is hard at work and appreciates the opportunity to follow up with information following a constituent meeting. Keep in mind that we always have actions available for you and your community at <https://marinesanctuary.org/get-involved/>. Thank you for using your voice for our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes and all those who depend on them.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Policy Team
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