

VOLUNTEER INSPIRED BY CHOW



As the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Volunteer of the Year for 2010, Jacqui Stanley was invited to participate in Capitol Hill Ocean Week June 8-10, 2010.

Following is a summary of the experience in her own words.

Jacqui Stanley Reports on Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW)

June 11, 2010--Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW), sponsored by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, was a wonderful learning experience!

It was a great honor to be chosen to represent Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, and to be amongst such great company of volunteers from the other sanctuaries. We all enjoyed sharing the special characteristics of our sanctuaries with each other, and it was a privilege to be with such dedicated people who share the same passions: to inspire people to preserve and protect our sanctuaries.

The theme of CHOW was "Clean Energy and a Healthy Ocean:Navigating the Future," a very timely topic. With the terrible events of the BP oil spill unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico, every discussion and debate was centered around how to make sure this never happens again.



Activities Galore

From a luncheon briefing: Sanctuaries 2025, where panelists debated how to perpetuate and increase special places in the world's oceans; to a great mixer in Silver Springs; to a special breakfast for the volunteers at the National Aquarium where we were presented with a pin and a plaque; to the opening session of Capitol Hill Oceans Week with a keynote address by Ken Salazar; to a fantastical Leadership Awards Dinner, the week grew into an exciting and inspirational event, filled with valuable information, insights, and always extraordinary people all dedicated to the protection of the world's ocean.



Jacqui Stanley (center, in jacket and skirt) stands with other sanctuary volunteers being recognized for their service.

At the Leadership Awards Dinner, Congresswomen Lois Capps and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen gave inspiring speeches, and Julie Packard from the Monterey Bay Aquarium received her Lifetime Achievement Award.

The national Volunteer of the Year nominees followed those outstanding women onto the stage, and we all congratulated Steve Kroll for his award as the overall National Marine Sanctuaries Volunteer of the Year.

Remembering Cousteau



Next, Jean-Michel Cousteau and his family came on stage to celebrate the 100th birthday of Jacques Cousteau. You might remember, whenever Jacques was on TV or in the news, he wore a red watchcap. So, everyone in the room was given red watchcaps, and we helped Jean-Michel toast his father.

Probably the reason all of us in that room ever loved the ocean was due to Jacques Cousteau. By the end of the recognition, we all felt that we could accomplish anything!

Making a Difference

This was not my first visit to Washington D.C., but it was my first visit as an American citizen. This time, I felt that I was a part of important decisions, my voice truly counted, and I could make a difference. That was evident during our visit to Congressman Gene Green, who was approachable and informed and interested in Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

The week's events were inspiring, educational, serious, sad, entertaining, and full of new friendships. With the terrible tragedy in the Gulf of Mexico unfolding in a more horrific nightmare every day, it also gave us all a real sense of urgency to the call to change our ways!

To see photos and video from CHOW 2010 events, visit the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Facebook page.

For information about CHOW 2010 visit the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation web site (<http://nmsfocean.org>).