

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)



Research Vessel John Dempsey

The DEP Research Vessel John Dempsey arrived in Long Island Sound waters twenty-one years ago this August after cruising 2,000 miles from its birthplace on the Gulf Coast. Working with DEP Marine Fisheries staff, Dave Simpson, Mark Alexander, and Peter Simpson the RV Dempsey was designed by Woodin & Marean, Inc. of Wiscasset, Maine and built by Sea-Fab Inc., of Pascagoula, Mississippi. Built with a 50 foot aluminum hull and powered by a Caterpillar diesel engine the ship has served the needs of fisheries and water quality monitoring for the agency, other federal agencies, and academic researchers since 1990. At the dedication ceremony held on August 9th, 1990, then Governor William O'Neill said "I can think of no more fitting name to crown this vessel with than that of Governor Dempsey, who launched the fight to clean up Connecticut's waters and the environment with the formation of the Clean Water Task Force in 1965 and the signing of this county's most comprehensive Clean Water Act in 1967." The primary purpose of the boat was to conduct bottom trawling, conduct sediment and water sampling and deploying larger sampling devices and acoustic equipment into the depths of the Sound. The vision was to enable DEP staff to assess the impact of hypoxic conditions and other water quality impacts in LIS and to continue a living marine resources survey begun by the Department's Bureau of Fisheries and Wildlife in 1979 and to serve as a Department wide "resource" for activities on Long Island Sound. This vision has been fully met and more in the marine fisheries and water quality monitoring programs of the DEP.





Today the RV Dempsey continues to be used to conduct the DEP's Spring and Fall fish trawl surveys, monthly water quality sampling cruises and supporting college research projects of LIS water quality. Deck machinery added to the ship's basic construction includes a side station A-frame boom and winch, a pair of main trawl winches and a stern net drum/hydrographic winch for trawl net and water quality monitoring equipment. With the advent of satellite based global positioning system (GPS) technology, the Dempsey has added electronic navigation systems

and the ability to continuously and precisely record ship's position, course and speed while conducting resource surveys including fish trawls and side-scan sonar mapping of bottom features on Long Island Sound.

Recently, the Dempsey was out of commission from June 2010 to April 2011. The main engine was replaced along with the generator and electrical panel. The bilge system was updated and there were upgrades to the plumbing. The lab was redone by the captain Rodney with new counters and cabinets. We have used the Dempsey for the April & May 2011 surveys and the spring trawl survey was completed with two goodwill trips taking local teachers out for a training day. The new engine is more efficient and will cut down on our fuel costs. The RV Dempsey has added to it's experiences over 20,000 hrs on the waters of the Sound, conducted over 4,400 fish trawls, and over 400 water quality monitoring cruises. Data collected with the assistance of the RV Dempsey has been augmented in recent years by real time water quality monitoring at stationary buoys in the Sound.

