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Maine's Island Institute demos new electric workboat with ePropulsion partnership



From top left: Lia Morris, senior community development officer, Island Institute; Patrick Fogg, president, Fogg's Boatworks; George "Casey" Morrill, dock manager Spruce Head Co-op; Chris Ponnwitz, chief commercial officer, Mack Sustainable Energy, Mack Boring & Parts Co.; Tom Watson, president, ePropulsion Americas; Phoebe Wheeler, community development officer, Island Institute; Bob Baines, captain F/V Thrasher, former Spruce Head Co-op president.

A nonprofit and a commercial fishing cooperative has partnered with ePropulsion to put a new high-voltage electric workboat into use for a daily lobster co-op service.

ePropulsion's electric propulsion system has been chosen by Island Institute to be used in studies and demonstrations for alternative power use in commercial fishing and maritime applications.



Island Institute (in partnership with Spruce Head Fisherman’s Co-op, Fogg’s Boatworks and ePropulsion, through its North American distributor Mack Boring & Parts) has launched its newest vessel, *Wattson*, in Maine.

“Launching *Wattson* marks a historic first, not just for Maine, but for commercial fishing operations around the world looking for a model that works on the water today,” says Lia Morris, senior community development officer for Island Institute. “Our mission has always been to help coastal communities thrive, and that means meeting fishermen where they are. ePropulsion gave us the technology to do that without compromising what matters most, reliability, performance, and supporting climate adaptation in heritage industries.”

Wattson will be used to support daily co-op operations using electric propulsion. Using ePropulsion’s X-20 powered by a G230 23.5kWh battery, the 16 foot aluminium alloy skiff will tackle nearshore commercial operations like towing lobster crates at the Spruce Head Co-op, as the first high-voltage workboat used by Maine lobstermen.

A world leader in electric boat motors and propulsion systems, ePropulsion delivers quiet, reliable and sustainable power through its range of outboards, inboards and pod drives. The partnership aligns closely with SailGP’s broader climate goals and on-water transition plans.

Electric propulsion for commercial users

Island Institute is putting recognised electric propulsion technology in the hands of commercial users. By launching demo boats, building out a pathway to expand shore-side charging infrastructure, and elevating Maine’s profile as a leader in electric propulsion, the institute aims to increase the adoption of climate-friendly technology that strengthens the resilience of Maine’s coastal economies and communities. Island Institute’s electric boat initiative is made possible with funding support from Builders Vision, Maine Technology Institute (MTI), the State of Maine, and corporate sponsors.



Island Institute has supported the transition of over 20 vessels to electric.

The newest addition will be used to transport crew and equipment to the moorings of the commercial fleet in the harbour and moving up to three tonnes of lobster to the dock for wholesale distribution.

According to electric propulsion specialist, ePropulsion, the power is transferred efficiently to propulsive power with low power consumption due to the high torque electric motor. Typically, the boat can run for several days on a single charge with its current duty cycle and can be fully recharged overnight with standard 110 shore power. Although the vessel spends most of its time below 5mph it can achieve planing speeds of 13mph.

“We’re excited to be a part of this momentous milestone in the commercial use of electric propulsion technology in Maine,” says Tom Watson, president of ePropulsion Americas. “We’re grateful to Island Institute for initiating this project and all of the partners involved for their trust in ePropulsion to help get the job done, cleanly and safely. We look forward to proving that our advanced, sustainable electric power and propulsion can continue to lead the way on the water in both recreational and commercial applications.”

Managing fishing responsibly

Jarod Bray, Spruce Head co-op and active member of the Maine Lobsterman’s Association, says: “Fishing is an important part of our communities, and managing it responsibly is key to keeping it sustainable long term. Taking small, gradual steps to incorporate new technology, where it fits, can help us better understand how these tools can work within our fishery and support livelihoods for generations to come.”

“We are thrilled to have been selected to design and build the platform for this exciting project,” says Patrick Fogg, president of Fogg’s Boatworks, LLC. “Our skiff was designed to be a classic, simple, and versatile work platform, specifically engineered to integrate and perform well with the ePropulsion X-20 system and the commercial applications required by the Spruce Head



Fishermen's Co-op. The performance and design of the X-20 system were very impressive. We believe this package has a wide range of uses for co-ops like Spruce Head, boatyards, marinas, and many other commercial applications that demand durability, efficiency, and low-end power.”