

Seafood Processing Managers Learn Tricks of the Trade

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

A group of aspiring cannery bosses from all over the state was in town this past week. The group of 15 mid-career professionals took part in the eight-day Alaska Seafood Processing Leadership Institute at the Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center on Near Island.

The week featured workshops, demonstrations and specific trainings, and was sponsored by the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program. Paula Cullenburg is the director for the program and said more than eight communities were represented from around the state.

"This group of 15 people has assistant production managers, assistant plant managers, human resource managers, foreman, from, I think we have ten different companies represented here. So they are people that are committed professionals to the seafood industry and they have been nominated by their companies as someone that has leadership potential that probably will be moving up the ladder within the processing industry. Our goal as the university, as the Alaska Sea Grant program in doing this is work on the succession of the seafood industry in our state because it's such a strong part of our economy."

Ryan Musch is a quality assurance manager for Ocean Beauty Seafoods in Cordova. He said the seafood industry is relatively new to him so this type of training and networking was extremely beneficial.

"It's been fantastic. I'm pretty new to the industry, six months in. This has been incredibly informative and good networking and just an overall great experience."

Laura Delgado is also a quality assurance manager, but works for APICDA Joint Ventures in Anchorage. She said the various workshops were extremely helpful.

"For me they've been really amazing. We've had other people from our company participate in this program and I've really looked forward to it. It's been a great introduction to a broad-base of seafood overall. From theory and science to actually now cooking and preparing the seafood. We've canned salmon, we've smoked it, hot smoke, cold smoke, we've freeze dried it. We actually got to touch the product. We toured a fish plant and have gone everywhere from the microbiology to the safety of working in the plant the week that we've been here."

She said it was definitely an intense eight days, but it's given her more resources for her job.

Wednesday was the last day of workshops in Kodiak. Participants will now have to select a mentor within their company, and work on a project for the next four months, utilizing some of the things they learned in

Kodiak. In February they will reconvene in Anchorage for leadership-specific workshops and present the projects they worked on.

Ken Smith hails from False Pass where he serves as a plant manager for Bering Pacific Seafoods, which is owned by APICDA Joint Ventures. Smith said he's looking forward to using the knowledge he's acquired and putting it toward a project.

"I think most everybody's picked that out and I've got my choice of some things that I want to learn. How to process peacod for instance and what we could do with the insides of a peacod to get better recovery. So that's one of my projects that I think I'm going to work on."

Kodiak local Alexandria Troxell said she hopes to work on incorporating some traditional techniques to salmon preparation. Troxell grew up in Old Harbor but now lives in Kodiak where she is the marketing director for Sun's Tribal Enterprises, also known as Kodiak Island WildSource.

"Working on, like a new smoked product. Something kind of traditional. Because I'm from one of the villages on the island, I'm from Old Harbor. And we do this kind of different smoked thing. But we'd have to figure out a way to make it safe to sell, so I was kind of thinking about doing that."

Other Alaska communities represented during the workshops in Kodiak were Seward, Unalaska, Homer, Petersburg, King Salmon and Wasilla.

After the participants meet in Anchorage in February they will wrap up the 21-day program by visiting the Boston Seafood Show to get a big picture view of Alaska's role in the world seafood market.