The Alaska Seafood Processing Leadership Institute got off to a good start last week at the UAF Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center. We have 15 participants, employees of 11 companies (Westward, Alyeska, APICDA, Sunaq Tribe, Trident, Icicle, Peter Pan, Ocean Beauty, Auction Block, Nakeen Homepack) hailing from 11 communities (Seward, Anchorage, Homer, Wasilla, Petersburg, Kodiak, King Salmon, Dutch Harbor and 3 out of state residents who work in AK).

The group includes assistant plant managers, production managers, a human resource manager, QA supervisor, foreman, marketing manager, and general manager. Mid-career professionals in the seafood processing industry are the targeted audience for ASPLI. Their company, who contributed tuition and identified a mentor, nominated each attendee.

This first intensive 8-day session began with attending ½ a day of the ASMI All-Hands meeting on Tuesday, October 29th. Travelling to Kodiak the next day, the group has focused on seafood safety and microbiology, characteristics of fish, effects of handling, chilling and freezing seafood, shelf life extension, parasites and marine toxin issues, nutritional aspects of seafood, use of seafood byproducts, smoking and canning fish, seafood marketing, innovations in processing equipment, and OSHA safety training. ASPLI participants have been in the microbiology lab and the seafood pilot processing plant measuring bacteria levels, smoking, canning, drying and freeze-drying fish, and reviewing freezing and temperature control. They have heard from a number of plant managers and had a food preparation demonstration from a local chef.

Over the winter, each ASPLI participant will carry out a project in partnership with his or her identified mentor. In late February, the group will reconvene in Anchorage for 5 days. They will review their projects, and take up subjects such as leadership skills, lean manufacturing, the seafood regulatory process and more marketing information. These 5 days in Anchorage will be followed by a 5-day trip to the Boston area. Three days will be spent at the International Boston Seafood Show followed by a tour of some local seafood processors in the Boston area.

ASPLI’s goal is to provide professional development training to rising leaders in Alaska’s seafood processing industry. Funding for ASPLI is from participant tuition, University of Alaska TVEP funds and the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program. Coordinators are Dr. Quentin Fong, Chris Sannito and Dr. Alex Oliveira. Contact qsfong@alaska.edu or 486-1516.