WSWS Officer and Committee Report
March 2025

Office or Committee Name: CAST Representative
Officer or Chairperson Name: Gregory Dahl
Date of Preparation (include year): March 6, 2025

Activities during the year:

Participated in the CAST National Meeting at the University of Florida, Gulf Coast Research and Extension Center at Wimauma, FL on November 18 – 21, 2024. Attendance was reduced at this meeting as two hurricanes occurred in Florida shortly before the meeting. We were uncertain whether they would be able to host us. Several CAST representatives opted not to go to the meeting. The Research Center did lose much field research, but the facilities and staff were wonderful and hosted us well. We had great tours of Florida field crops, strawberries, tomatoes and potatoes. New crops such as hops and artichokes were also featured. We visited a fertilizer mine. We discussed automation in field agriculture and saw many active projects and technologies. Marty Matlock presented a keynote presentation on who speaks for agriculture. We have many voices but there is not a real leading voice for agriculture. We need better unity and messaging as we move agriculture forward.

I am working as CAST Liaison towards a **CAST Issue Paper on "Integrated Management of Fire Adapted Invasive Plants Responsible for Changing Wildfire Regimes."** This was developed based on the WSWS workshop on fire and invasives at the 2022 annual meeting organized by Matt Baur, WIPM Center Director). Matt Baur is the project leader. Several members of the WSWS Invasive Species Committee have written sections for the publication. I am serving as CAST Liaison on this project. The sections are written, and we are sending the paper to reviewers. **We want to have the paper issued in 2025 and are looking for opportunities to present it.**

A few years ago, Keith Scheske challenged us to become lifetime members of CAST. I finished payments and **I am now a Lifetime Member of CAST** when I visited them in February.

CAST is going through many changes. They have created new logos, they have had staff changes and need to do a rebuild of capabilities and focus.

The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) and the Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation announced on Monday, February 10, that they will combine their operations to advance agricultural science and innovation. Through their agreement, CAST will acquire SoAR's assets, and all SoAR materials will be integrated into CAST's website.

Strategic Integration

The effort will combine Soar's impactful policy and research initiatives with CAST's extensive network of experts and communication capabilities. As a leader in communicating science-based information to policymakers, industry leaders, the media, and the public, CAST will expand on Soar's legacy of advancing agricultural scientific breakthroughs.

"This agreement represents a shared vision to elevate the importance of agricultural research," said Chris Boomsma, CEO at CAST. We are excited to integrate SoAR's valuable work as we continue advocating for the agricultural research that powers innovation, resilience, and sustainability in agriculture."

Continuing the Mission

Through this action, SoAR's mission, including its groundbreaking reports, will continue to live on through CAST's platform and initiatives. The integrated organization will focus on amplifying the impact of agricultural research and advocating for continued innovations to give farmers and ranchers the tools they need to succeed in the face of growing challenges.

"By joining forces with CAST, SoAR is ensuring its mission endures and thrives in a time when agricultural innovation is more critical than ever," said Karl Anderson, SoAR President. "We are proud of our history and look forward to CAST's continued efforts to highlight innovative solutions that advance our food security."

Honoring Soar's Legacy

Since its founding by the late Dr. William Danforth, the SoAR Foundation has driven impactful campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of agricultural research funding, securing significant funding boosts for USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the nation's premier competitive grants program for agricultural sciences.

SoAR's work also brought the human face of agricultural research to policymakers and the public through the innovative *Retaking the Field* reports, showcasing research breakthroughs across the nation, and groundbreaking reports such as *Science Breakthroughs 2030*, which outlined transformative research priorities. These achievements align seamlessly with CAST's mission of delivering credible, unbiased, science-based information to key audiences.

I visited CAST Headquarters at Iowa State University in Ames, IA on February 18, 2025. Had a great visit with CAST representatives. Picked up a tabletop display from CAST to be used at the Weed Science Society of America/Canadian Weed Science Society Joint Annual Meeting in Vancouver, BC on February 23 – 27, 2025 and the Western Society of Weed Science Meeting in

Seattle, WA on March 9 – 13, 2025.

Represented the WSWS on the CAST Plant Working Group. Participated in most of the monthly CAST Plant Working Group ZOOM meetings. Discussed and prioritized projects and publications that are in development and identified new topics to be evaluated as projects.

Met a few times with Jill Schroeder, CAST Representative for WSSA, and other Regional Weed Society CAST Representatives Tom Peters, CAST Representative for NCWSS, Anthony Witcher and now Randy Prostak, CAST Representative for NEWSS, Todd Baughman, CAST Representative for SWSS, Gray Turnage CAST Representative for APMS, and Lee Van Wychen WSSA Director of Science Policy. Sharon Clay, CAST Representative for ASA has retired. This has been helpful to us in coordinating and completing our CAST Representative Efforts. Participated with the WSSA and Regional Weed Science Societies to publicize CAST at each of the meetings.

Other publications or items of interest that can be found at the CAST Web Site:

CAST Issue Publication: Potential for U.S. Agriculture to Be Greenhouse Gas Negative. November 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: Impacts of Soil Health Practices on Hydrologic Processes, May 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: FIFRA, ESA, and Pesticide Consultation: Understanding and Addressing Complexities, April 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: Preventing the Next Plant Invasion: Opportunities and Challenges, March 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: Applications, Benefits, and Challenges of Genome Edited Crops, March 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: State Regulatory Agencies as Conduit for Informing Local Conditions in Federal Pesticide Processes, March 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: FIFRA, ESA and Pesticide Consultation: Identifying and Overcoming the Complexities from a Growers Perspective, February 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: Developing and Adopting Economically Effective Pesticide Mitigation Strategies: Critical to the Survival of Agriculture and Endangered Species, January 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: RNA Interference in Agriculture: Methods, Applications, and Governance, January 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: Improving the FIFRA/ESA Process by Addressing Key Obstacles and Incorporating Better Data and Tools, January 2024.

CAST Issue Publication: A Legal Discussion of the FIFRA/ESA Consultation Process Over Time, December 2023.

CAST Issue Publication: FIFRA and the Endangered Species Act: Finding a Balance between Agricultural Efficiency, Environmental Sustainability, and Regulatory Stability, November 2023.

CAST announces that nominations for the 2025 Borlaug CAST Communication Award (BCCA) will open on March 25, 2025. The selected recipient will be honored at a special award ceremony during the 2025 World Food Prize events in Des Moines, Iowa, scheduled for October 21-23, 2025.

I plan to attend the 2025 CAST National Meeting at the Mississippi State University in Starkville, MS, Fall, 2025.

Recommendations for Board Action:

Thank you to the Western Society of Weed Science for supporting and working with CAST. Please keep our support for CAST strong. Thank you for the opportunity to serve WSWS and CAST.

Budget Needs:

No additional needs at this time.

Name of Person Preparing This Report: Gregory Dahl