

CAST Report

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The CAST board of Directors meeting was held March 17-20, 2009 in Washington, DC. Representing Weed Science were: John Madsen – APMS rep, Jeffrey Derr - WSSA rep. Bob Sweet – NEWSS rep, and Phil Stahlmann – WSWS rep, Karen Renner (NCWSS rep) and Scott Senseman (SWSS rep) were unable to attend. Among other speakers, Gale Buchanan, a long term advocate of CAST, addressed the board on his take on issues facing CAST. Fran Boyd of Meyers & Associates addressed the board on legislative issues in the house and Senate.

The budget is tight at CAST, with an approximate 25% decline in income. Declines in individual membership, society membership, and corporate sponsorship have occurred. Current individual membership is 532, down from 793 in 2008. To address this, CAST is planning on switching from 2 annual meetings to 1 starting in 2010. CAST is also looking at the dues member societies pays and is requesting that member societies fund travel for their representatives to attend CAST meetings. In the past, CAST paid travel costs for one meeting for society representatives, effectively returning the dues back to the member society for smaller organizations. CAST is requesting external financial sponsorship for new publications. CAST is interested in partnering with societies on publications, joint meetings, and other potential means of cooperation.

CAST receives some financial support from the federal government. Listed below is a paragraph taken from Senator Tom Harkin's recent newsletter on CAST:

“COUNCIL FOR AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CAST): CAST is a nonprofit organization that assembles, interprets and communicates science-based information on key food and agriculture issues to policymakers, regulators, members of the media and the general public. CAST seeks out professional scientists, who are experts in their respective disciplines, to author and peer-review CAST publications. These experts volunteer their services to CAST, resulting in documents that are unbiased and highly respected for their presentation of credible and sound science. \$110,000 was provided to continue CAST's work.”

The most recent CAST publication is "Sustainability of U.S. Soybean Production: Conventional, Transgenic, and Organic Production Systems." It documents the ecological and economic implications of the various systems used in U.S. soybean production. Other released publications in 2009 include “Fate and Transport of Pathogens in Swine Manure” and “Ruminant Carcass Disposal Options for Routine and Catastrophic Mortality”.

The 2009 winner of the Charles A. Black award was Wayne Skaggs. Dr. Skaggs is a William Neal Reynolds and Distinguished University Professor of drainage and agricultural water management in Biological and Agricultural Engineering at North Carolina State University. He teaches and conducts research in drainage and subsurface water management engineering.

The next CAST board meeting is Oct. 6th - 9th, 2009 St. Louis, MO, The Hilton St. Louis Frontenac. Henry Shands, Crop Science Society of America, is the current president and Todd Peterson from Pioneer is the president-elect. Here is the CAST website: <http://www.cast-science.org>.