

Center for Applied Space Technology

A Message from CAST Executive Director, Maria Peterson

The Center for Applied Space Technology has long advocated the utilization of unmanned technologies, particularly Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), to perform a variety of activities that are often referred to as “dull, dirty, and dangerous. The CAST objective in such operations was to encourage the transition of the capabilities of such systems from a purely DOD mission to the conduct of civil applications. Though our initial efforts to demonstrate the identification and track of sea turtles, manatees, and dolphin were derailed by the nation’s response to 9/11, CAST continued (without great success) to pursue opportunities to evaluate UAS at the Kennedy Space Center in the conduct of resource tracking, environmental management, and wildfire tracking and monitoring. These efforts culminated in a CAST proposal for a share of funding allocated by the President to address job creation on the Florida Space Coast following the retirement of the space shuttle program. Although the funding never materialized, on the basis of this proposal and the UAS knowledge resident in CAST, Space Florida engaged the Center to conduct initial evaluation of such industry within the state as well as the development of a strategic plan for developing the unmanned industries within Florida. Two significant developments occurred as a result of this initial evaluation and strategic planning:

- (1) The strategic plan formed the basis of the state’s proposal to gain status as a FAA UAS Test Range,
- (2) Space Florida established a not-for-profit with a mission to support the growth of the unmanned technology and related industries within the state.

Space Florida selected the CAST staff to define, organize, and bring to operation this not-for-profit, the *Center for Advanced Aerospace Platforms and Applications (CAAPA)*. Though completely separate entities, CAST will be supporting the CAAPA mission, where appropriate. Further information on CAAPA may be found at www.caapaf.org .