Outlook of 2024 *Sargassum* blooms

A perspective for the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico*

April 30, 2024, by University of South Florida Optical Oceanography Lab
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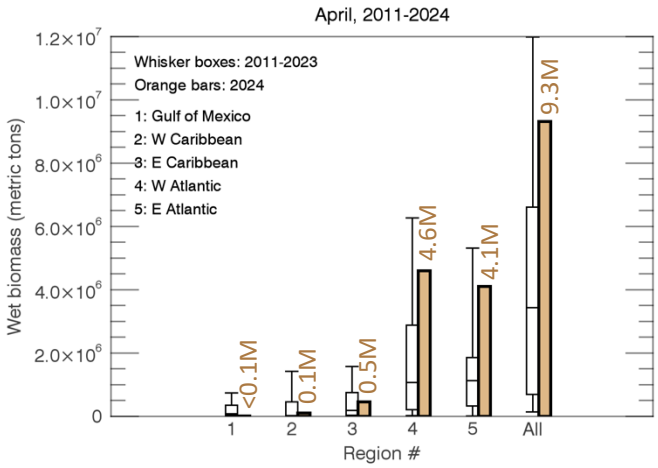
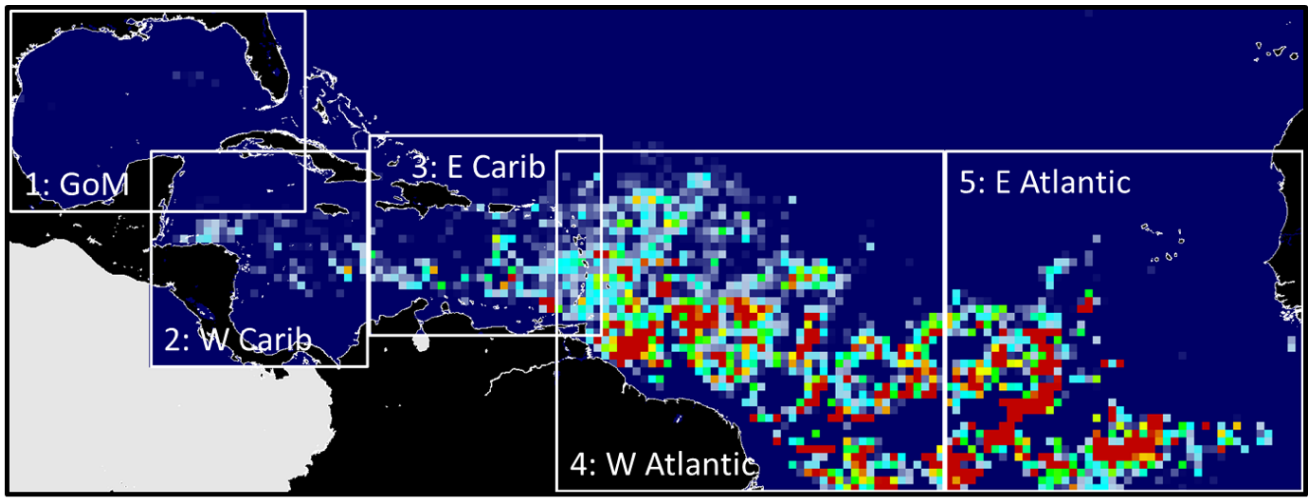
The map below shows average *Sargassum* abundance for the month of April 2024, with warm colors representing higher abundance. The *Sargassum* abundance for each region is compared with historical values in the same month of 2011 – 2023 in the whisker box plot below, where horizontal bars in each vertical box indicate minimum, 25%, 50%, 75%, and maximal historical values, respectively.

As predicted last month, *Sargassum* amount increased in April in almost every region, with a total biomass of 9.3 million metric tons. Most of the increase occurred in the W Atlantic and E Atlantic, both exceeding the 75 percentiles of historical values for the month of April. The eastern Caribbean Sea (CS) experienced moderate increase, with a total biomass of 0.5 million metric tons. The western CS also received small amounts of *Sargassum*, with most of the seaweed restricted to the southern portion approaching Belize.



Sargassum abundance in the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) remained low, but small amounts were captured in satellite images by late April, some of which may have entered the Straits of Florida approaching the Florida Keys.

Looking ahead: As in previous years, we expect increased *Sargassum* amounts in the central Atlantic, the CS, and the GoM over the next 2-3 months. Many E Caribbean nations and islands will see increased *Sargassum* inundations in May. By late May, the coastal regions along the Mexican Caribbean coast may receive moderate amounts of *Sargassum*. The southeast coast of Florida (including the Florida Keys) may experience small amounts of *Sargassum* by late May. We will closely monitor and track *Sargassum* throughout the central Atlantic, and will provide more summary updates at the end of each month. Meanwhile, all previous monthly bulletins as well as daily updates through near real-time imagery can be found under the *Sargassum* Watch System (SaWS, https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html).



Disclaimer: The information bulletin is meant to provide a general outlook of current bloom condition and future bloom probability for the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. By no means should it be used for commercial purpose, or used for predicting bloom conditions for a specific location or beach. The authors of this bulletin, as well as USF and the Federal funding agencies, take no responsibility for improper use or interpretation of the bulletin.