Outlook of 2019 *Sargassum* blooms in the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico*

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The maps below show *Sargassum* abundance, with warm colors representing high abundance. In May 2019, the following regions continued to experience large amounts of *Sargassum*: Central West Atlantic (CWA), entire Caribbean Sea (CS), eastern Gulf of Mexico, northern Florida Straits, and waters off east coast of Florida. In addition to numerous reports of *Sargassum* beaching in the Caribbean, beaching events have also been reported along the southeast coast of Florida. In the CS, the amounts of *Sargassum* are comparable to the historical record in 2018 for the same month.

Looking ahead, because the amount of *Sargassum* in the CWA in May 2019 is lower than in May 2018, the amount of *Sargassum* transported from the CWA to the CS (i.e., "new" *Sargassum* to the CS) during June – July 2019 may be lower than in June - July 2018. However, this transport will still be higher than most of the previous "*Sargassum* years" during the same month. Furthermore, because of the local growth and already large amount in the CS, the amount in the CS in June – July 2019 will continue to be high. Meanwhile, the transport to the Gulf of Mexico and east coast of Florida will continue, meaning that beaching events along the east coast of Florida will also continue. The exact *Sargassum* amount, timing, and location of the beaching will depend on local ocean circulations and winds.

For summer 2019, because of the high amounts of *Sargassum* in the CWA in May 2019, large amounts of *Sargassum* (comparable to the 2nd largest amount in summer 2015) in the CS and Gulf of Mexico are a high possibility. More updates will be provided by the end of June 2019.

More information and near real-time imagery can be found under the *Sargassum* Watch System (SaWS, https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html)