Outlook of 2020 *Sargassum* blooms in the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico*

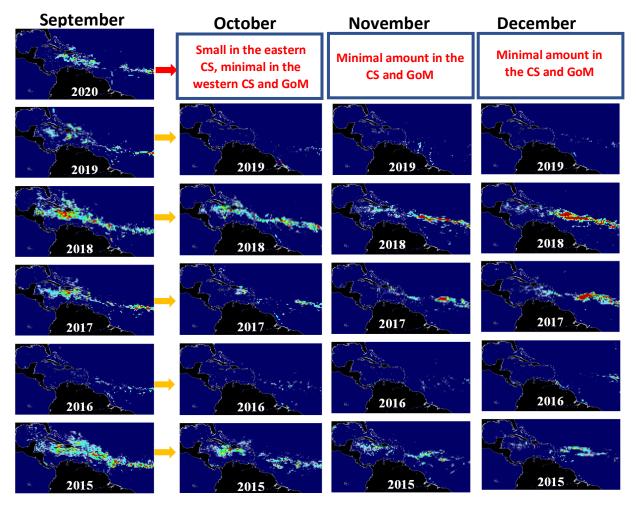September 30th, 2020, by the University of South Florida Optical Oceanography Lab (huc@usf.edu)

The maps below show *Sargassum* abundance, with warm colors representing high abundance.

In September 2020, the overall *Sargassum* amount further decreased across most of the central Atlantic. Moderate amount was still observed in the Central West Atlantic (CWA, i.e., the region east of the Lesser Antilles in the maps below) and most of the eastern Caribbean Sea (CS). In contrast, the following regions are almost free of *Sargassum* mats: western CS, Gulf of Mexico (GoM), Florida Straits, and east coast of Florida. In all regions combined, the total *Sargassum* amount decreased from 4.2 M metric tons in August to 3.5 M tons in September, lower than September 2015, 2017, and 2018. **However, unprecedented large amount of *Sargassum* appeared in the Central East Atlantic along the west Africa coast from The Gambia to Liberia** (not shown in the maps below).

Looking ahead, the eastern Caribbean will continue experiencing small amount of *Sargassum* in October. The rest of the Caribbean as well as the following regions will be pretty much free of large *Sargassum* mats for the next few months, possibly through winter: GoM, Florida Straits, and east coast of Florida. It is currently unknown how the record-high *Sargassum* amount along the west Africa may change in the coming months, but we will keep a close eye on this region.

More updates will be provided by the end of October 2020, and more information and imagery can be found from the *Sargassum* Watch System (SaWS, https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html)

September	October	November	December
2020	Small in the eastern CS, minimal in the western CS and GoM	Minimal amount in the CS and GoM	Minimal amount in the CS and GoM
2019	2019	2019	2019
2018	2018	2018	2018
2017	2017	2017	2017
2016	2016	2016	2016
2015	2015	2015	2015