Outlook of 2023 *Sargassum* blooms in the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico*

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The maps below show *Sargassum* abundance, with warm colors representing higher values. Overall, the *Sargassum* quantity in the Great Atlantic *Sargassum* Belt (extending from west Africa to the Gulf of Mexico) during the month of April 2023 was approximately equal to that observed for March 2023. This is attributed to persistent clouds in the eastern Atlantic that led a decrease in the satellite-observed *Sargassum* quantity for that region. Elsewhere, continuous increases in the *Sargassum* quantity have been observed, including the Central West Atlantic, the Caribbean Sea (CS), and the Gulf of Mexico (GoM).

The *Sargassum* aggregations in the Central Atlantic have continued to move westward with prevailing currents and winds. In the CS, record *Sargassum* abundance was observed (3 million tons), with notable buildups later in the month along southern coasts of Hispanola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. *Sargassum* abundance in the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) was comparable to that seen in the same month of previous major bloom years, with aggregations observed along the extended Loop Current (stretching to the northern GoM coast), as well as sporadically in western portions of the basin. *Sargassum* beaching events have already been reported throughout the CS and Southeastern Florida.

Looking ahead, the total *Sargassum* quantity is expected to increase over the next few months, with impacts of beaching events in the CS and GoM worsening accordingly. *Sargassum* aggregations east of the Antilles Islands and in the CS will continue to accumulate and migrate westward, while abundance in the GoM will likely increase substantially. Impacts of *Sargassum* beaching events will continue to be felt throughout the CS and GoM coastal regions, although it is difficult to predict exact timing and location for individual beaching events. We will continue to closely monitor and track *Sargassum* in each region, with more summary updates provided by the end of May 2023. Meanwhile, daily updates through near real-time imagery can be found under the *Sargassum* Watch System (SaWS, https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html).