

A perspective for the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico*

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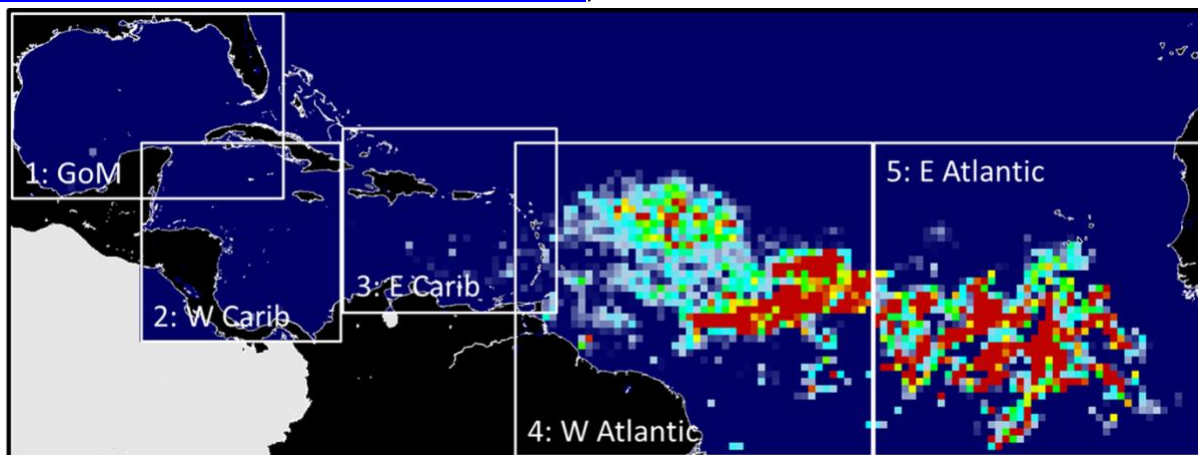
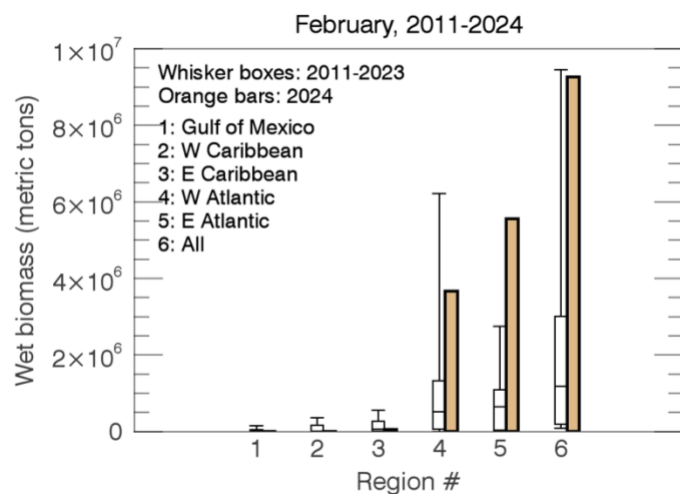
The map below shows average *Sargassum* abundance for the month of February 2024, with warm colors representing higher values. The *Sargassum* abundance for each region is compared with historical values (February of 2011 – 2023) in the whisker box plot below, where horizontal bars in each vertical box indicate minimum, 25%, 50%, 75%, and maximum, respectively.

Total *Sargassum* amount continued to increase to about 9 million metric tons, representing the second highest amount for the month of February. However, nearly all increases occurred in the interior central Atlantic basin as opposed to the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) and the Caribbean Sea (CS). In fact, *Sargassum* abundance in the GoM and CS was minimal and all below 50 percentile or even 25 percentile of previous years. In contrast, *Sargassum* abundance in the western Atlantic exceeded the 75 percentile of previous years, and in the eastern Atlantic represented a new record. However, given the persistent cloud cover during the second half of February, the value in the eastern Atlantic may be subject to large uncertainties.

As predicted earlier, small amount of *Sargassum* reached the Lesser Antilles during the second half of February, and some of it was transported even further to the west to the interior CS.

Looking ahead: We expect continued *Sargassum* growth over the next few months as the primary *Sargassum* bloom in the interior Central Atlantic continues to expand. This bloom will also continue to migrate westward, with increased *Sargassum* amount in the CS. The southeast coast of Florida (including the Florida Keys), however, will be largely free of *Sargassum* until at least late April or 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.