Outlook of 2024 *Sargassum* blooms

A perspective for the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico*

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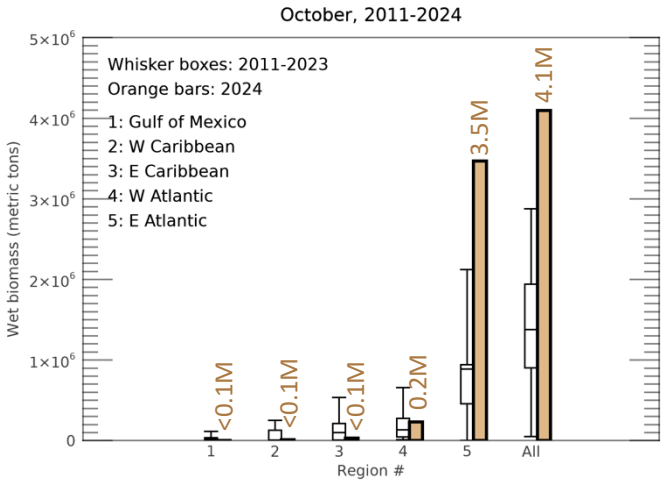
The map below shows average *Sargassum* abundance for the month of October 2024, with warm colors representing higher abundance. The *Sargassum* abundance for each region is compared with historical values in the same month of 2011 – 2023 in the whisker box plot below, where horizontal bars in each vertical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

As predicted last month, total *Sargassum* amount in each of the 5 regions either remained negligible or continued to decline in October, with the western Atlantic and the eastern Caribbean Sea (CS) experiencing the largest declines. Compared to most previous years since 2011, however, *Sargassum* amount in the western Atlantic still remained relatively high (above the 50 percentile). The Gulf of Mexico (GoM) and western CS continued to be mostly free of *Sargassum*. In the eastern Atlantic, although *Sargassum* amount declined from the previous month, it still represented a new record.



Looking ahead: In all previous years, October is the month of continuous decline in *Sargassum* abundance in every region, and this year is no exception. This trend is likely going to continue in the coming months to at least December. Specifically, the CS and the GoM (including Florida) will continue to be *Sargassum* free. The eastern Atlantic region is also likely to see declined *Sargassum*, but month-to-month fluctuations may also occur due to multiple factors. On the other hand, if the total amount of *Sargassum* in this region continued to remain high in the next two months as compared to historical values, then 2025 may be another major *Sargassum* year. We will closely monitor and track *Sargassum* throughout the central Atlantic. 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).