

## Outlook of 2025 Sargassum blooms



A perspective for the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico\* February 28, 2025, by University of South Florida Optical Oceanography Lab (bbarnes4@usf.edu, yuyuan@usf.edu, huc@usf.edu)

The map below shows average *Sargassum* abundance for the month of February 2025, with warm colors representing higher abundance. The *Sargassum* abundance for each region is compared with historical values in the same month of 2011 – 2024 in the whisker box plot below, where horizontal bars in each vertical box indicate minimum, 25%, 50%, 75%, and maximal historical values, respectively.

Compared to January, although more *Sargassum* was found in the Caribbean Sea (both the western Caribbean and east Caribbean) due primarily to the westward transport from the tropical Atlantic through the Lesser Antilles, total *Sargassum* amount in the tropical Atlantic (both western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic) decreased in February. The spatial distribution patterns in the tropical Atlantic

remained stable. While the decreases in the tropical Atlantic were not predicted in the January bulletin, similar decreases also occurred in several previous years. Nevertheless, compared to most previous years since 2011, *Sargassum* amount in the western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic still exceeded each region's 75 percentile.

**Looking ahead:** As in most previous years, March is expected to see increased *Sargassum* from February. More *Sargassum* is expected to enter the Caribbean Sea through the Lesser Antilles. *Sargassum* in the western Caribbean



Sea is likely to be transported to the Gulf of Mexico, resulting in increased *Sargassum* amount in the Gulf. Despite the decreased *Sargassum* amount this month, 2025 still appears to be a 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, <u>https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html</u>).



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