

Outlook of 2026 *Sargassum* blooms

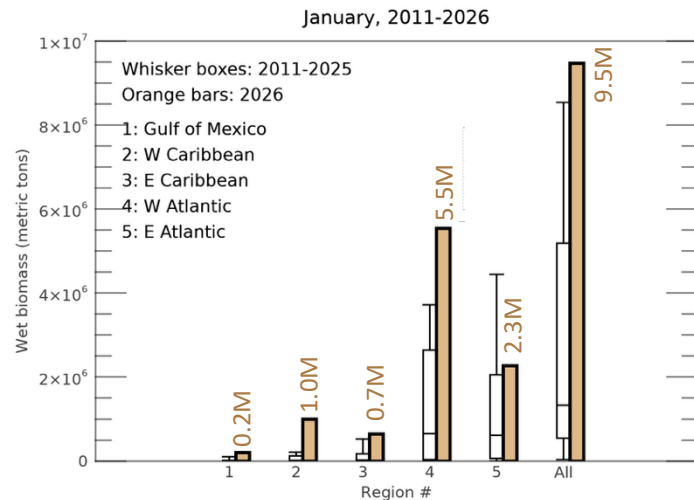
A perspective for the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of America*

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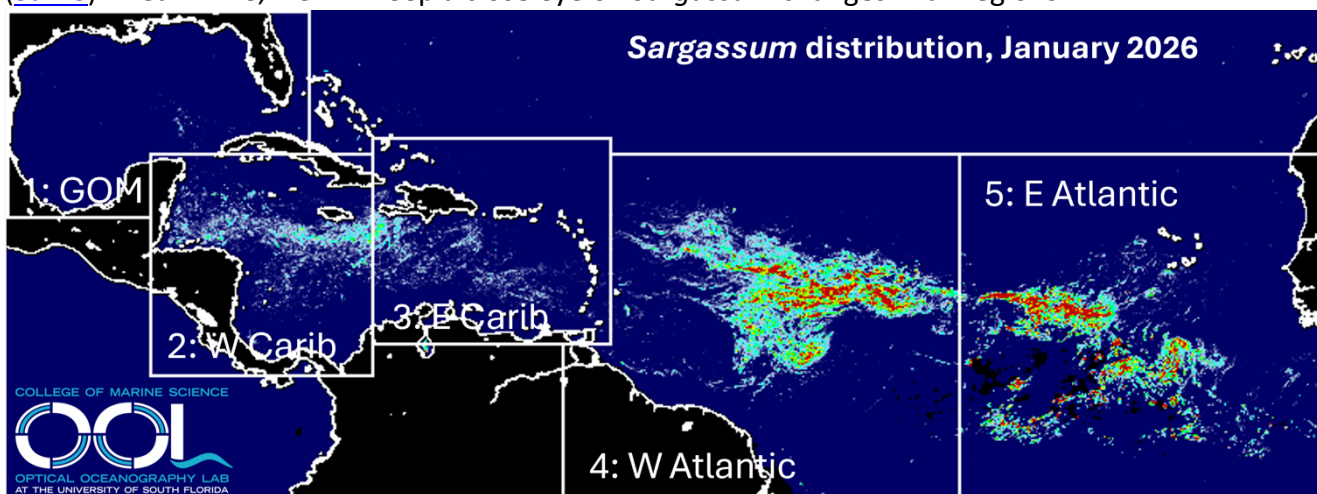
The map below shows the average *Sargassum* abundance for the month of January 2026, with warm colors representing higher abundance. The top color (red) indicates that 0.4% of the ocean surface is covered by *Sargassum*, meaning that *Sargassum* clumps and mats are scattered here and there in the location. The *Sargassum* abundance for each region is compared with historical values in the same month of 2011 – 2025 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, *Sargassum* in the Caribbean continued to grow, from 0.45M tons in Dec 2025 to 1.7M tons in Jan 2026. The Gulf also showed measurable *Sargassum* of 0.2M tons, mostly to the north of the Yucatan channel. While the E Atlantic remained stable, the W Atlantic saw a substantial increase from 4.1M to 5.5M tons. Except for the E Atlantic region, every other region saw record-high *Sargassum* amount for the month of January. The distribution map shows three separated large masses in the E Atlantic, W Atlantic, and the Caribbean, respectively. Some regions in the W Caribbean, including Belize, Honduras, and the Mexican Caribbean coast, should have already seen some beaching events.



Looking ahead: As in the past years, *Sargassum* amount in most regions is likely to increase in the coming month. The W Caribbean will continue to see beaching events in some regions. Some of the Lesser Antilles islands may start to see beaching events. Because of the continuous growth from November to January and because of the record-high *Sargassum* amount in most regions, 2026 is very likely another major *Sargassum* year (i.e., *Sargassum* amount exceeds 75% of the historical values).

All previous monthly bulletins as well as daily imagery can be found under the *Sargassum* Watch System ([SaWS](#)). Meanwhile, we will keep a close eye on *Sargassum* changes in all regions.



Disclaimer: The bulletin is meant to provide general outlooks of current and future bloom conditions 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. Credit for the images and information should be given to the Optical Oceanography Lab at the USF College of Marine Science.