Outlook of 2022 *Sargassum* blooms in the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico*

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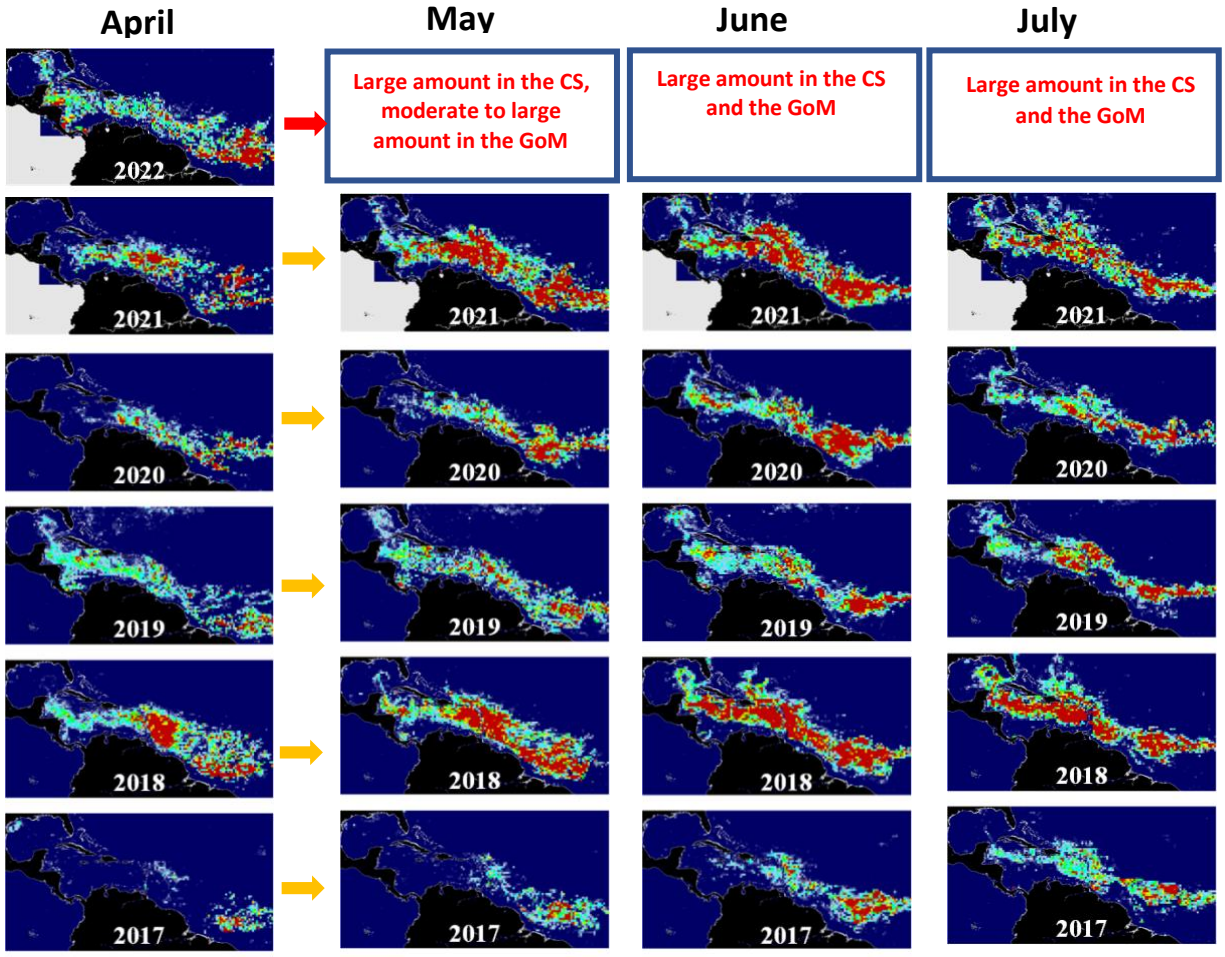
The maps below show *Sargassum* abundance, with warm colors representing high abundance. **In April 2022, the overall *Sargassum* amount increased significantly across the tropical Atlantic, the Caribbean Sea (CS), the Gulf of Mexico (GoM), and the Central West Atlantic (CWA, i.e., the region east of the Lesser Antilles in the maps below), setting a new historical record for the month of April.** Moderate amount of *Sargassum* has reached as north as the Mississippi River mouth, which is about 1 – 2 months earlier than most previous major bloom years. Small amount was found in the Straits of Florida and along the southeast coast of Florida, indicating possible beaching events. Major beaching events may have occurred around the nations/islands in the CS, especially along the east coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. In all regions combined, the total *Sargassum* amount increased from ~6.2 million tons in March 2022 to ~14.0 million tons in April 2022, exceeding the previous record in April 2018 (12.6 million tons).

Looking ahead, 2022 will be another major *Sargassum* year. The *Sargassum* amount will likely continue to increase in the following months, more *Sargassum* will be found in the GoM, and more beaching events will occur in the Florida Keys and along the east coast of Florida. We will keep a close eye on how *Sargassum* in the CS and the tropical Atlantic may evolve in the next two months. More updates will be provided by the end of May 2022, and more information and 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. 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 NASA, take no responsibility for improper use or interpretation of the bulletin.