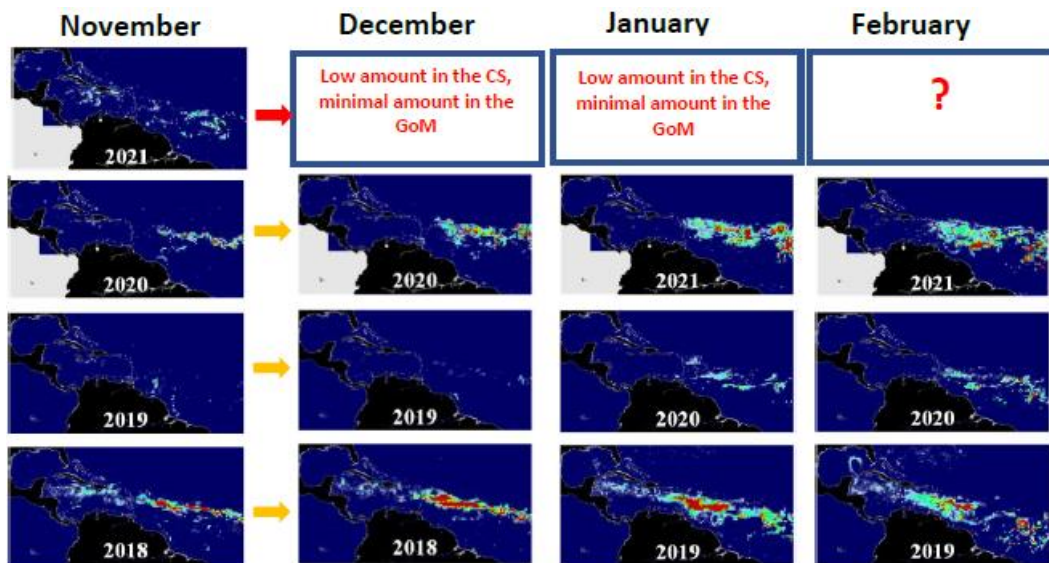


**December 2021:**

**Have a relatively Sargassum free Christmas!**

Sargassum quantities have continued to decrease with a 35% drop seen between October and November 2021. The University of South Florida [Optical Oceanography Lab](#) has been examining satellite images to track the sargassum blooms over the years, and states: "In November 2021, the overall *Sargassum* amount continued to decrease from October 2021 (by 35%). Moderate amounts continue to be observed in the Caribbean, but very little *Sargassum* was found in the Gulf of Mexico. Compared with the same month of previous years, the total amount (1.7 M tons) is lower than in 2018 (3.2 M tons) but similar to 2015, 2017 and 2020." The maps below, with warm colours representing high abundance, displays the years 2018 to 2021.



Map 1: Comparison of Sargassum blooms between 2018 and 2021. [Sargassum Watch System](#), University of South Florida



Map 2: November 2021

The good news from this reports is that Sargassum amounts are down consistently for the last two months. For the first time since February 2021, we are looking at minimal sargassum amounts in the waters around Antigua & Barbuda. We will continue to see small beaching events, particularly if the prevailing weather conditions are from the South. However, it looks like we will have a relatively *Sargassum* free December. Merry Christmas!

I will caution by saying that the trend that we are seeing has been observed over the last few years. Sargassum amounts are minimal between October and February, then begin to increase drastically once more. However, Sargassum is versatile, its drivers are still not yet fully understood, and stakeholders are advised to continue to be vigilant and take all efforts to reduce the impact of a the Sargassum where possible. We will continue to monitor the satellite reports and track *Sargassum* movement across the Atlantic to the best of our abilities.



The Islands of the Caribbean, inclusive of Antigua, Barbuda and Redonda, have been affected by Sargassum Seaweed (*Sargassum sp.*) since 2011. Sargassum blooms appear to originate off the coast of South America and have been affecting the Caribbean island chain with varying ecological and anthropogenic/economic effects. Sargassum seaweed grow on the ocean surface and provide ecosystem services such as habitat for juvenile marine organisms (e.g. fish, turtles) and foraging areas while on the sea, but biologically degrade upon contact with the shoreline, leading to negative impacts.

*Ruleo Camacho, Marine Ecologist, National Park Authority ([rcam.doe@gmail.com](mailto:rcam.doe@gmail.com))*

*\*Maps and Data Source: <https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/saws.html>*