

Responding to a sargassum influx

If sargassum appears on your beach, what you do next can be good or bad for the beach and business. Important lessons have been learned so far.

Here's what you need to know

Sargassum is a *natural* seaweed that floats in the Atlantic Ocean.

It's an *important home* for marine life, like fish and sea turtles.

It's a problem only when it comes ashore in *massive amounts*.

A complaint is the smell of *rotten egg gas* as wet sargassum decomposes. There are potential health risks at *high gas concentrations*.



What should you do?

Communication is key!

Inform beach users about sargassum - manage their expectations.

Direct beach users to unaffected or clean beaches.

Agree how much sargassum justifies cleaning.

Determine which beaches will be cleaned.

Join with partners and share the job.

Organise wildlife patrollers to inspect for stranded sea creatures like sea turtle hatchlings, collect and release them with some sargassum into offshore currents.

Leave some sargassum for beach nourishment.

Keep in touch with local environmental agencies as forecasting models are in development.



Take care!

These actions cause serious harm to the beach.

- 1 Constant beach grooming
- 2 Removing sand from the beach or dunes
- 3 Heavy machinery used carelessly
- 4 Clearing or trampling beach vegetation
- 5 Driving above the high water mark and through sand dunes
- 6 Driving over sea turtle nests
- 7 Cleaning before patrollers - Let them check for signs of wildlife before you start cleaning!

If my beach looks like this...

No action

required on this beach



Leave the sargassum alone - let nature run its course. Be patient - it will wash away or get buried. Rest assured - it will benefit your beach and save you money and effort.

Taking action?

Manual raking is the approach to take



It's simple, low cost and environmentally friendly. Get communities involved in these beach clean-ups. Run educational scavenger hunts for sea creatures in sargassum.

Separate plastic pollution from sargassum for disposal. Transport using wheelbarrows, bags or tarpaulins and take to designated disposal areas.

Work with partners

and plan a mechanical response



Take a multi-stage approach - remove upper layers of sargassum with machinery, without touching the sand, then rake manually or run mechanical beach raking equipment.

Clean high usage areas first and leave other beaches for nature to clean.

Remove the sargassum as soon as possible after arrival to avoid vast accumulation.

Do's & Don'ts

✓ Clean in daylight

✓ Use same route on and off the beach

✓ Consider public safety
Avoid mechanical cleaning around fishers and beach goers

what about...
REMOVAL
from shallow water?

! Sargassum is heavy when wet.

Removal from close to shore may prevent sargassum from rotting in the water.

Consider a horse-drawn trap to collect sargassum in suitable sea conditions as an environmentally friendly removal option.

Different methods have been tried but are labour intensive and costly (eg. booms, barges, vacuums) Results are mixed - stability problems, unloading issues and unwanted by-catch of marine life.

✓ Consider a horse-drawn trap

✗ If using a bucket, don't gouge sand

✗ Never use tractor or belted equipment

✓ Supervise use of machinery

✗ Don't clean near dunes

✓ Use machines with large soft tires

✓ Machines with a claw or rake are preferable

✓ Manual cleaning is preferred

✓ Clean at low tide

✓ Keep equipment on damp sand in the tidal zone

- Designate sites for the disposal of sargassum.
- Use sunny locations for drying and decomposition.
- Re-distribute sargassum to fill eroded beaches.
- For sea turtle nesting beaches, transport sargassum off-site, don't dump on dunes or nests.

➤ Use as mulch or compost - wash out salt first.

➤ New uses are being developed - like bio-stimulant and bio-fuel.

➤ Sargassum is not suitable for human consumption.

how do we **DISPOSE** of sargassum?

✗ **NO-GO Areas: turtle and bird nests**
Do not enter with cleaning equipment

✓ **Observe**
Patrol the beach searching for wildlife

✓ **Use mechanical beach raking equipment with perforated conveyor belt**

For more information please contact: sargassum@gcfi.org

GCFI pelagic sargassum factsheet: www.gcfi.org

Sargassum uses and more information: www.sargassum-at-cermes.com

Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association Sustainability Webinar No. 5: <https://youtu.be/qhkgfEpkAjl>

University of Southern Mississippi sargassum reporting site: <http://www.usm.edu/gcr/sargassum/index.php>

"Rotten egg gas" health effects: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/hydrogensulfide/hazards.html>

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