



Lakewood...

78° (/weather)

The Great Atlantic Sargassum

Monday, April 24th 2023, 5:28 PM EDT

By Alex Vaughn

The Great Atlantic Sargassum is hitting Key West, the Lower Keys, and Cocoa currently. The potentially toxic seaweed has a chance of making it onto the Suncoast.

The belt of seaweed gets its nutrients from upwelling, rivers, and farm chemicals. It's even growing in places, where it didn't used to grow.

“What we’re worried about, is that we’ll have an early season hurricane, that would come up through the Yucatan straights, into a very warm Gulf of Mexico, and bring the sargassum up into the gulf, where it could effect, Gulf Beaches. But right now, we do have some in the Gulf of Mexico. But it’s not close to the Florida coast at this time. So, I don’t think we have any immediate threat, in the Sarasota, Bradenton area, right now”, said bob Bunting.

“Now we have sargassum growing in an entirely different area. And it’s an area that is like 5000 miles across. And more important than where it’s growing, is, it is growing in areas, where it is getting nutrients it never used to get”, said David Tomasko.

Tomasko says this is not a typical sargassum, because of how large it is.

“It actually, it isn’t toxic. But when it kinda gets brought onto the shoreline, and it decomposes, if it’s still in the water, it can use up all the oxygen. And when that happens, the bacteria that composes, organic matter, will switch from oxygen to sulfate. And the end product of that is hydrogen sulfide. And hydrogen sulfide is toxic”, said David Tomasko.

There are two things that are stimulating the sargassum. One is record high temperatures of the sea water. And the other is agricultural runoff, loaded with nutrients like fertilizer.

“Has been the runoff through the Amazon rain forest, into the Amazon river and Rio Negro, in Brazil. Because they cut down a lot of the forest and changed it into farm land. And that farm land is not all that fertile. It’s fertile for a year or two, then they have to use massive amounts of fertilizer to grow crops on it”, said Bob Bunting.

According to Bob Bunting, CEO of the Climate Adaptation Center in Sarasota, the sargassum is piling up in the caribbean.

The sea breeze has the potential to drag the seaweed onto Gulf Beaches.

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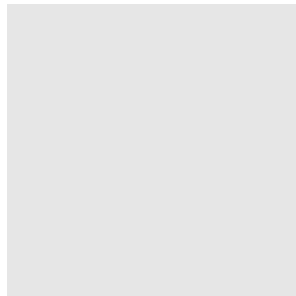
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