The Sargasso Sea Commission
An innovative approach to the conservation of areas beyond national jurisdiction

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Executive Secretary
Sargasso Sea Commission

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Bermuda EEZ = 464,940 sq km or 179,514 sq. miles

Sargasso Sea = ~ 5 179 976 sq km or 2 million sq. miles
Map commissioned by SSA from Duke University Marine Geophysical Ecology Lab – Dr Pat Halpin
Why is the Sargasso Sea important?
- Unique open-ocean sargassum-based ecosystem. Mostly High Seas
- Important for life history of many species (eels, turtles, tuna, billfish, sharks, etc.)
Sargassum Endemics 145 invertebrate species live in association with Sargassum
Iconic species
Midwater and Benthic Fauna
Nursery/Feeding area: eggs/juveniles of >80 fish species occur in Sargassum
Catches of yellow and silver eels in EC
European Eel Life Cycle

- Glass eel
- Leptocephalus
- Eggs
- Ocean
- Continent
- Silver eel
- Elver
- Yellow eel

SARGASSO SEA COMMISSION
Distributions of *Anguilla* leptocephali in the Sargasso Sea
Threats

- Garbage and plastics
- Pollution, discharges, spills
- Fishing
- *Sargassum* harvesting
- Exotic species introduction from ballast waters
- Climate change and ocean acidification
- Deep sea mining?
- Underwater cables?
Threats
The Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea (March 2014)
Hamilton Meeting Participants

**bold** denotes Signatory

**Governments**
- Azores
- Bahamas
- **Bermuda**
- British Virgin Islands
- Netherlands
- **Monaco**
- Sweden
- South Africa
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- **United Kingdom**
- United States

**Observer Organizations**
- ISA- International Seabed Authority Secretariat
- OSPAR (former Executive Secretary)
- Convention on Migratory Species Secretariat
- IUCN
- Inter-American Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Sea Turtles

*Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago unable to attend but supportive*
Meeting of Signatories
(Meets as required)

Sargasso Sea Commission
Stewardship Role. Meets virtually.
Volunteers acting in personal capacity

Sargasso Sea Secretariat
Small Permanent Body
Meeting of Signatories
(Meets as required)

Sargasso Sea Commission
Stewardship Role. Meets virtually. Volunteers acting in personal capacity

Sargasso Sea Secretariat
Small Permanent Body

Financial Mechanism
- 501 (c)(3) in US
- Registered Charity in Bermuda
Meeting of Signatories

- Pursue collaboration and cooperation in furtherance of the common vision of this Declaration;
- Provide advice and guidance for the Commission in its role of promoting the conservation of the Sargasso Sea;
- Take forward proposals for protection measures to appropriate international bodies
The Sargasso Sea Commission
Role of the Sargasso Sea Commission

- Exercise a **stewardship role** for the Sargasso Sea and keep its health, productivity and resilience under continual review; and

- Develop a **work programme** and action plans for the conservation of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem
Setting up the Organization
Sargasso Sea Commission
"Over-Arching Goals"

1. Promote international recognition of the **unique ecological and biological nature and global significance** of the Sargasso Sea.

2. Encourage **scientific research** to expand existing knowledge of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem in order to further assess its health, productivity and resilience.

3. Develop proposals for submission to existing regional, sectoral and international organizations to promote the objectives of the Hamilton Declaration.
Agreed Work Programme 2014-16

1. International Recognition of the Ecological Importance of the Sargasso Sea
2. Fisheries and Fisheries Habitat Conservation
3. Impacts from International Shipping
4. Impacts to the Seafloor and Seabed
5. Conservation of Migratory Species
6. Defining Role in Data and Information Management
1. International Recognition of the Ecological Importance of the Sargasso Sea
Summary Science Case, 2011

Edited by Professors Dan Laffoley and Howard Roe

74 collaborators from over 10 countries and 11 science institutions

Completed and approved by UK and Bermuda Governments
Convention on Biological Diversity

EBSA Process

• “Described” at regional workshop (March 2012)

• CBD COP submitted Sargasso Sea EBSA to CBD repository

• Does not establish a MPA

• Exploring leverage opportunities
UN General Assembly Annual Omnibus Resolution on Oceans and Law of the Sea 2012, 2013 & 2014

Noted the efforts of the Sargasso Sea Alliance – led by the Government of Bermuda – to raise awareness of the ecological significance of the Sargasso Sea;

Proposed:

2014 Bahamas and South Africa,
- Supported by US, UK and Monaco
World Ocean Assessment 2015

The only named ecosystem in the United Nations Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment - First Assessment Report

CHAPTER 50
2. Fisheries and Fisheries Habitat Conservation
North-west Atlantic Fisheries Organization
Sargasso Sea measures under discussion
International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas - ICCAT
3. Impacts from International Shipping
Maritime Traffic in the Sargasso:
An Analysis of International Shipping Activities
and their Potential Environmental Impacts

Julian Roberts

Sargasso Sea shipping risk assessment: addressing the threat from invasive
species and nutrient inputs

The Sargasso Sea Alliance

A strategic assessment of the risks posed
by shipping to the Sargasso Sea and
evidence of impacts

Prior, J S H (2013) Sargasso Sea
the threat from invasive species.
Sargasso Sea Alliance, Washington

Sargasso Sea Commission
Still discussing appropriate measures

Possibilities are:
- MARPOL Special Area
- Routeing
- Reporting
- Ballast Water
- Sewage
4. Impacts to the Seafloor and Seabed
Submarine Cable Industry Collaboration
Workshop October 2014

International Telecom Cables in the Sargasso Sea ABNJ

Map courtesy Verizon
5. Conservation of Migratory Species
Joint Concept Note by IAC and Sargasso Sea Commission Secretariats on the importance of Sargassum and the Sargasso Sea for Atlantic Sea Turtles

Published 2015
Convention on Migratory Species

- Monaco submitted Submission for listing of *Anguilla anguilla*
- July 2014 CMS Science Council supported
- Approved at Quito CoP Nov 2014-
- 2015 Oct Workshop on American Eels - Maine
- 2016 Range State Measures....
6. Defining Role in Data and Information Management
Place-based Dynamic Management of Large-Scale Ocean Places: Papahānaumokuākea and the Sargasso Sea

David Freestone, Ole Varner, Meredith Bennett, T. Aulani Wilhelm, Theodore M. Beuttler, Jeff Ardon, Sara Maxwell, and Kate Killerlain Morrison

INTRODUCTION

A. Two Important Marine Ecosystem Regimes
1. Introduction to the establishment of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, including its dynamic nature and importance to our natural environment.
2. Introduction to the Sargasso Sea Alliance, including the Sea’s importance and dynamic nature.

II. MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS AND CHALLENGES
A. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument
1. Definition of Papahānaumokuākea
2. Frameworks and challenges in its management by federal and state agencies.

Can existing institutions protect biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction? Experiences from two on-going processes.

Abstract

The Sargasso Sea Alliance: Seeking to Protect the Sargasso Sea

The Sargasso Sea Alliance was formed to promote the protection of the Sea, an area that extends across the mid-Atlantic Ocean and encompasses several countries. The Alliance is composed of environmental organizations, scientists, and policymakers from the United States, United Kingdom, and other countries. The primary goal of the Alliance is to raise awareness about the threats facing the Sea, including overfishing, pollution, and climate change, and to advocate for policies and measures that protect the Sea and its inhabitants.

Can existing institutions protect biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction? Experiences from two on-going processes.

David Freestone, David Johnson, Jeff Ardon, Kate Killerlain Morrison, and Sebastian Unger

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NASA mapping partnership

- In-kind partnership to develop initial satellite map product for Sargasso Sea
- Uses two years of oceanographic data
- Future phases to include other data providers on fishing and shipping information
For more information

www.sargassoseacommission.org