




# The Sargasso Sea Commission Working to Protect the “Golden Rain Forest of the Atlantic”

*Dr. David Freestone*  
Executive Secretary,  
Sargasso Sea Commission

American Eel Range State Virtual  
Workshop  
18-19 May, 2021





Why is the Sargassum  
important ?



- Unique open-ocean sargassum-based ecosystem. Mostly High Seas
- Important for life history of many species (eels, turtles, tuna, billfish, sharks, etc.)

# THE SARGASSO SEA

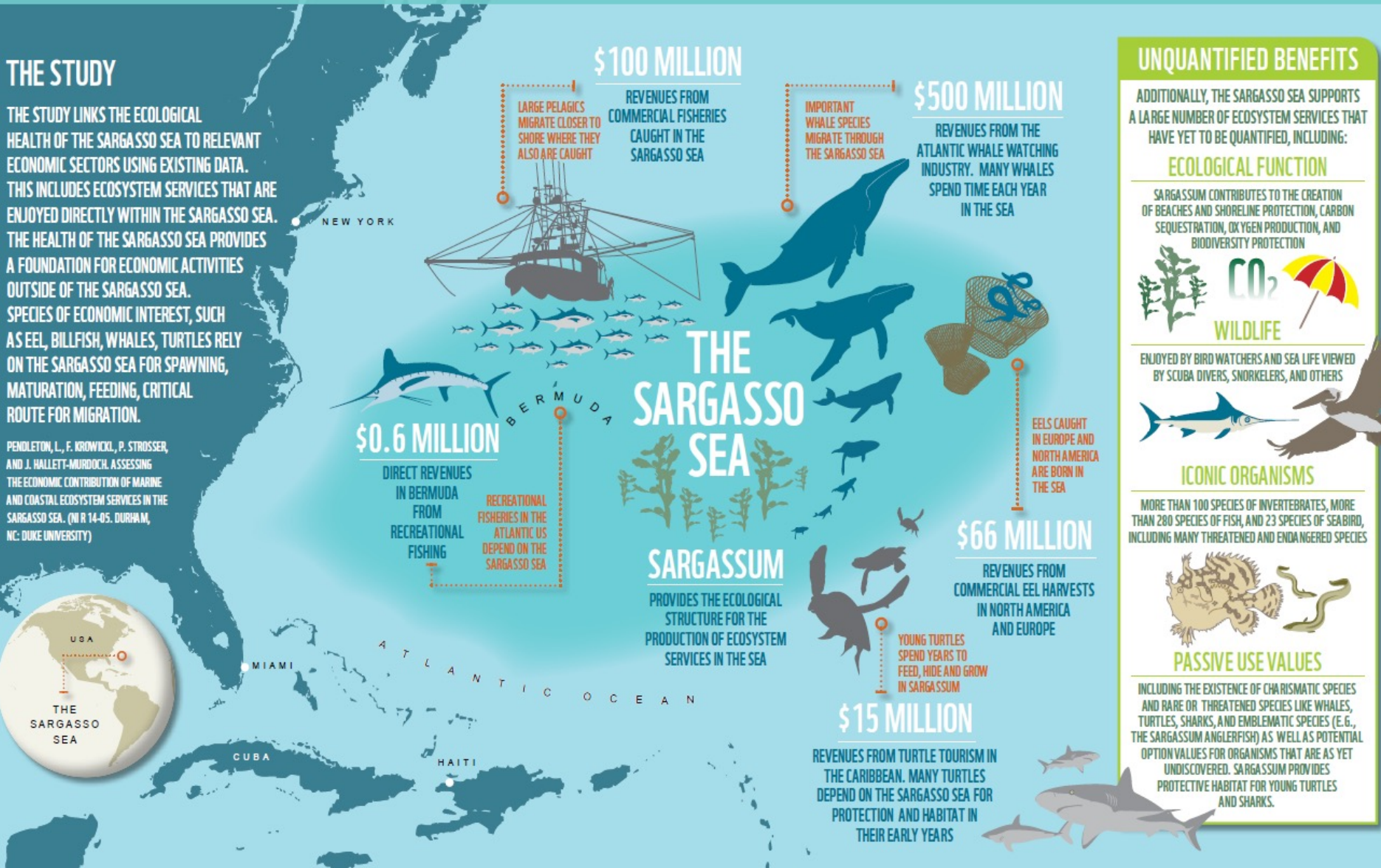
## A VITAL ECOSYSTEM OF GLOBAL IMPORTANCE

THE SARGASSO SEA CREATES AN ESSENTIAL HABITAT FOR WORLDWIDE SPECIES GLOBALLY, BUT WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THIS HIGH BIODIVERSE AND PRODUCTIVE AREA?

### THE STUDY

THE STUDY LINKS THE ECOLOGICAL HEALTH OF THE SARGASSO SEA TO RELEVANT ECONOMIC SECTORS USING EXISTING DATA. THIS INCLUDES ECOSYSTEM SERVICES THAT ARE ENJOYED DIRECTLY WITHIN THE SARGASSO SEA. THE HEALTH OF THE SARGASSO SEA PROVIDES A FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THE SARGASSO SEA. SPECIES OF ECONOMIC INTEREST, SUCH AS EEL, BILLFISH, WHALES, TURTLES RELY ON THE SARGASSO SEA FOR SPAWNING, MATURATION, FEEDING, CRITICAL ROUTE FOR MIGRATION.

PENOLETON, L., F. KROWICKI, P. STROSSER, AND J. HALLETT-MURDOCH. ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN THE SARGASSO SEA. (NIR 14-05. DURHAM, NC: DUKE UNIVERSITY)



### UNQUANTIFIED BENEFITS

ADDITIONALLY, THE SARGASSO SEA SUPPORTS A LARGE NUMBER OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES THAT HAVE YET TO BE QUANTIFIED, INCLUDING:

#### ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION

SARGASSUM CONTRIBUTES TO THE CREATION OF BEACHES AND SHORELINE PROTECTION, CARBON SEQUESTRATION, OXYGEN PRODUCTION, AND BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION



#### WILDLIFE

ENJOYED BY BIRD WATCHERS AND SEA LIFE VIEWED BY SCUBA DIVERS, SNORKELERS, AND OTHERS



#### ICONIC ORGANISMS

MORE THAN 100 SPECIES OF INVERTEBRATES, MORE THAN 280 SPECIES OF FISH, AND 23 SPECIES OF SEABIRD, INCLUDING MANY THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES



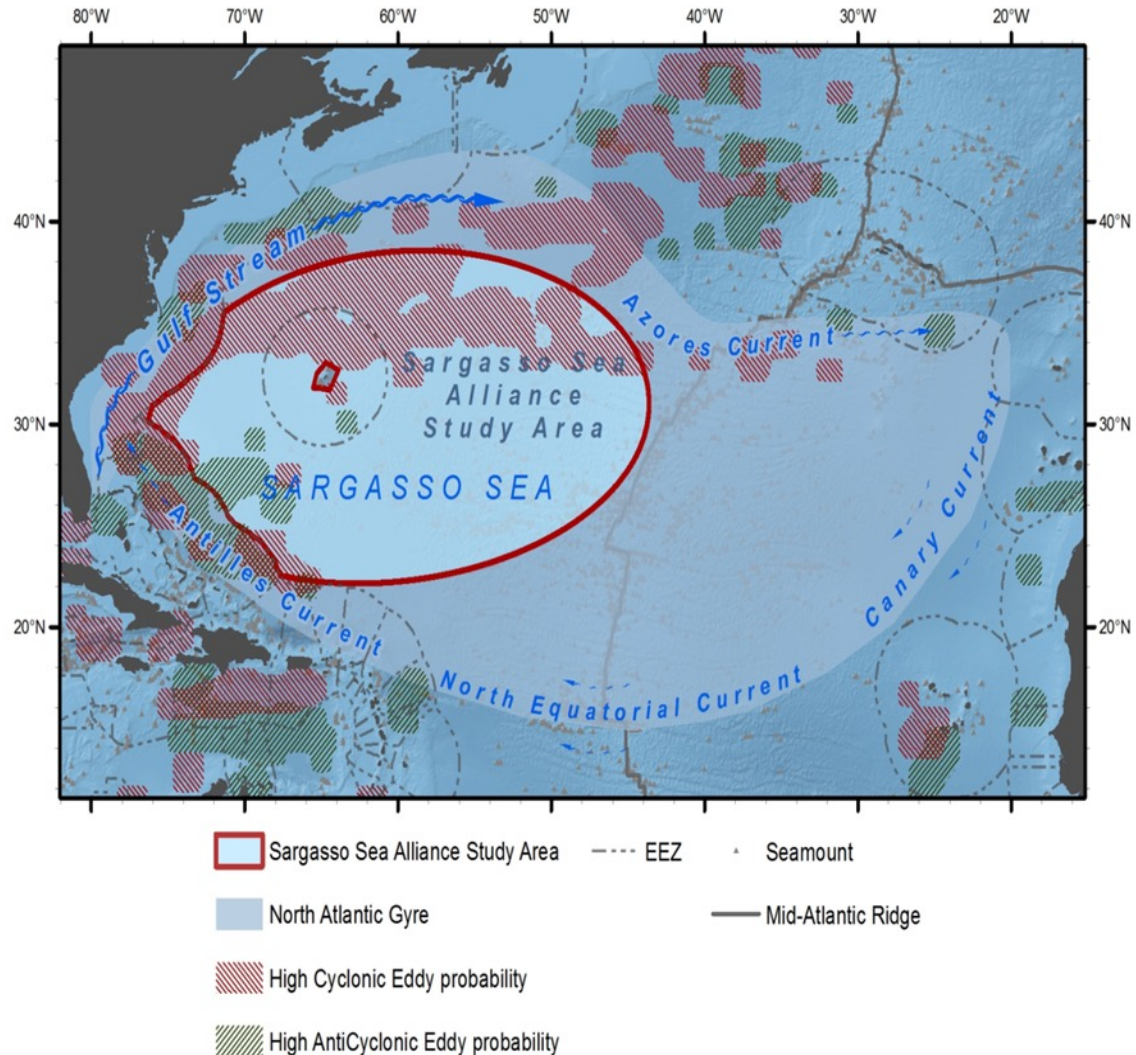
#### PASSIVE USE VALUES

INCLUDING THE EXISTENCE OF CHARMATIC SPECIES AND RARE OR THREATENED SPECIES LIKE WHALES, TURTLES, SHARKS, AND EMBLEMATIC SPECIES (E.G., THE SARGASSUM ANGLERFISH) AS WELL AS POTENTIAL OPTION VALUES FOR ORGANISMS THAT ARE AS YET UNDISCOVERED. SARGASSUM PROVIDES PROTECTIVE HABITAT FOR YOUNG TURTLES AND SHARKS.

# 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





Sargassum fish - JP Rouja



**Sargassum Swimming Crab**  
**NOAA**





Sea horse JP Rouja

# Iconic species





**Humpback in Sargassum**  
**Andrew Stephenson**



Flying fish eggs JP Rouja

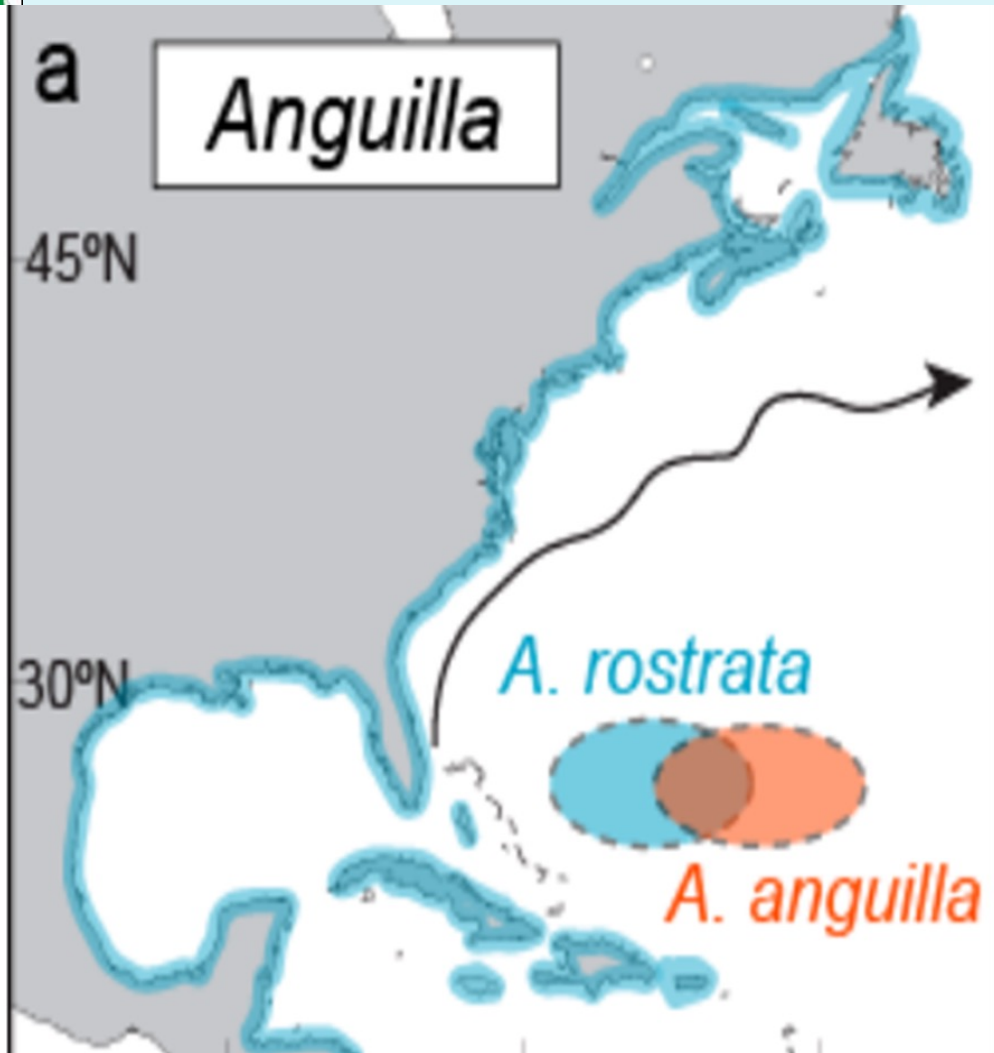
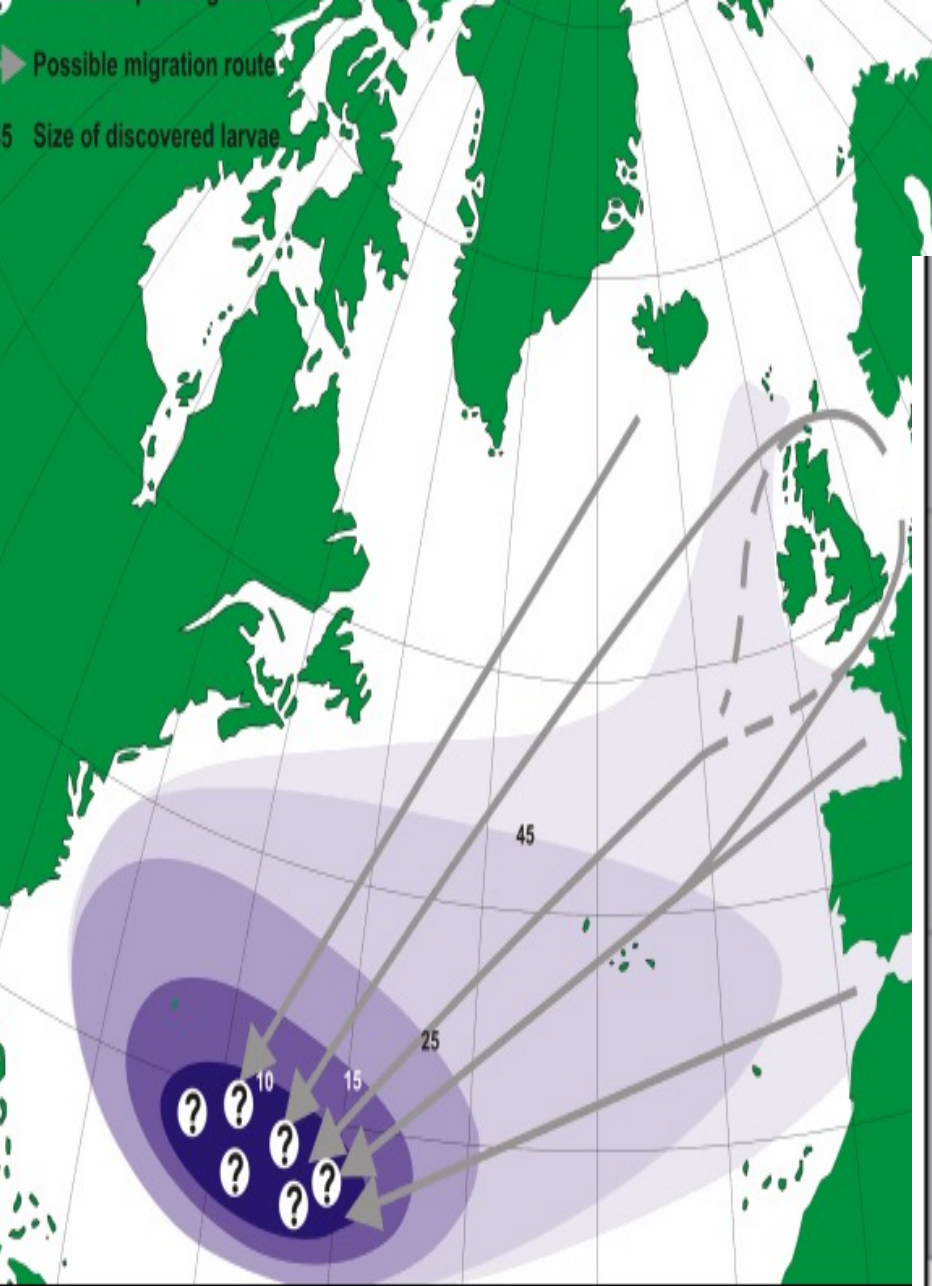


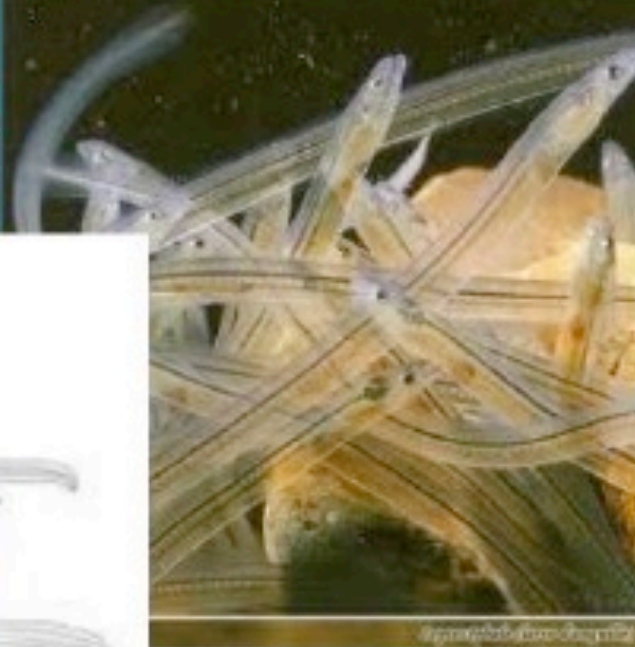
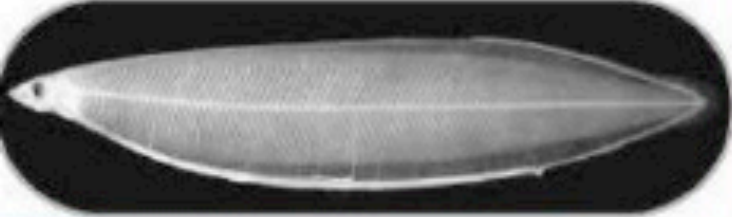
Flying fish JP Rouja



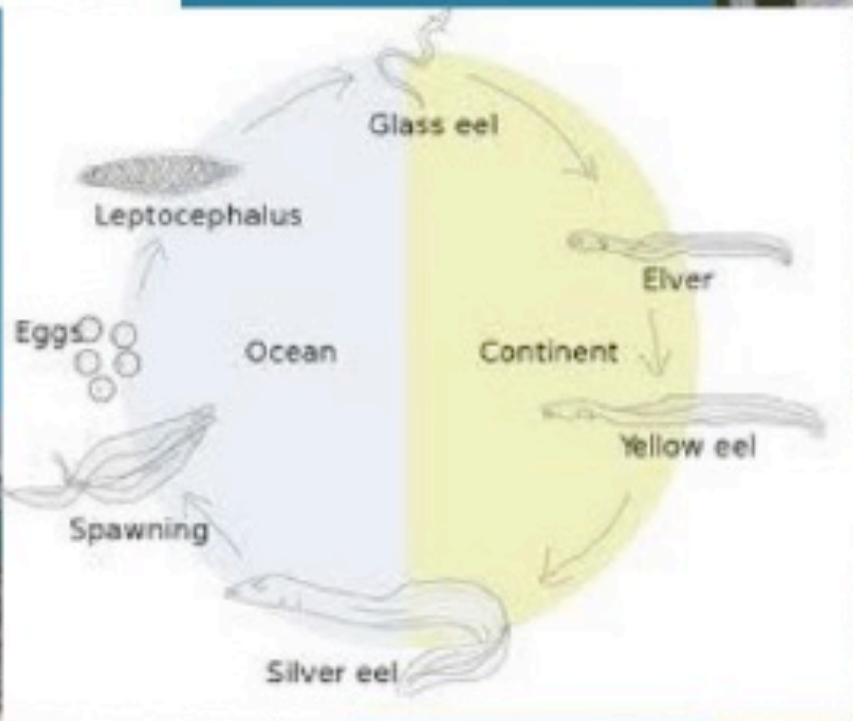
Baby Leatherbacks

# Global Connections





# European Eel Life Cycle





# The Hamilton Declaration

on Collaboration for  
the Conservation of  
the Sargasso Sea

(March 2014)

# Signatories

## Governments

- Azores
- Bahamas 2016
- Bermuda
- British Virgin Islands 2016
- Canada 2016
- Cayman Islands 2017
- Dominican Republic 2018
- Monaco
- United Kingdom
- United States
  - Netherlands, Sweden, South Africa,
  - Turks and Caicos\*

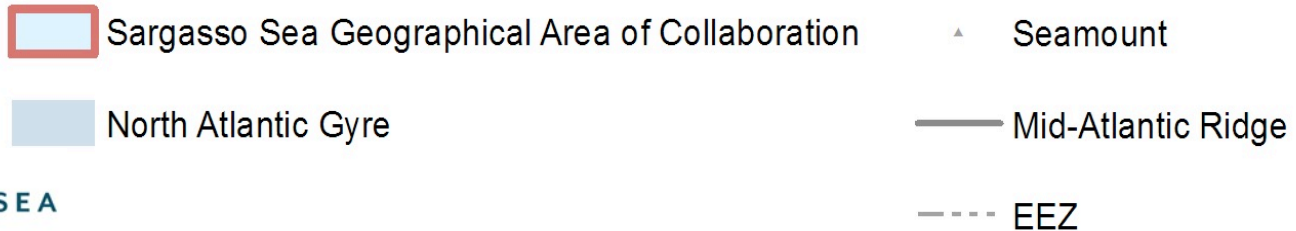
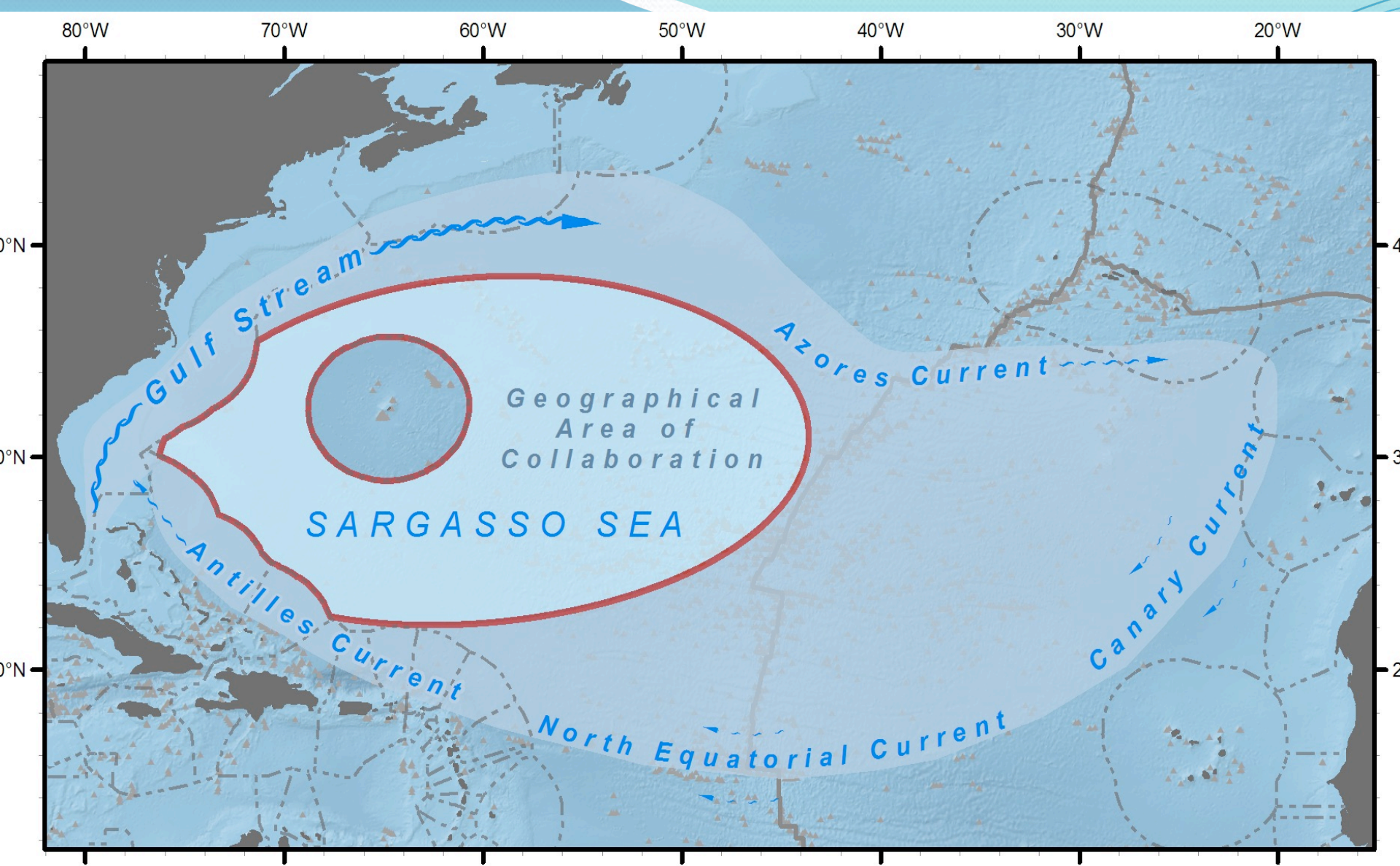
## Observer Organizations

- 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
- \* *Trinidad and Tobago unable to attend but supportive*

# 2014



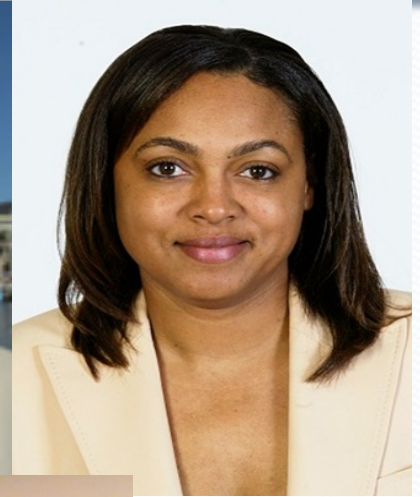
SARGASSO SEA  
COMMISSION



# 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



Prof Howard Roe    Rochelle Newbold    Prof Stephen de Mora    Dr Tammy Warren  
Senator Wilfred Moore    Mark Spalding    Frederico Cardicos

# 5. Conservation of Migratory Species





# Convention on

# Migratory

# Species

- 2014 Monaco submitted Submission for App II listing of *Anguilla anguilla*
- July 2014 CMS Science Council supported
- Nov 2014- Appendix II listing approved at



# American Eel Symposium

## Portland, Maine 23-25 October

### 2015





# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

*Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme*



## First Range States Workshop on the European Eel

*Galway, Ireland, 13 – 14 October 2016*





# Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Regional Workshop on Eel and the Baltic Sea

Task force on migratory fish species (FISH-M 5-2017)

Stockholm, Sweden, 29 November – 1 December 2017

*Organized in  
cooperation  
with:*

**Swedish Agency  
for Marine and  
Water Management**



# Workshop

Santo Domingo, 4-6 April, 2018





# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

*Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme*



## Second Range State Workshop on the European Eel Malmö, 15-16 May 2018



# *Third Range State Workshop on the European Eel Malmö, 25-26 June 2019*



**Particularly to  
DFO, Canada  
Dr Matt Gollock  
Tess Mackey  
Fae Sapsford**



**For more information  
[www.sargassoseacommission.org](http://www.sargassoseacommission.org)**