

COMMON
OCEANS
PROGRAM



PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND BIODIVERSITY
IN THE OCEAN AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

Sargasso Sea project



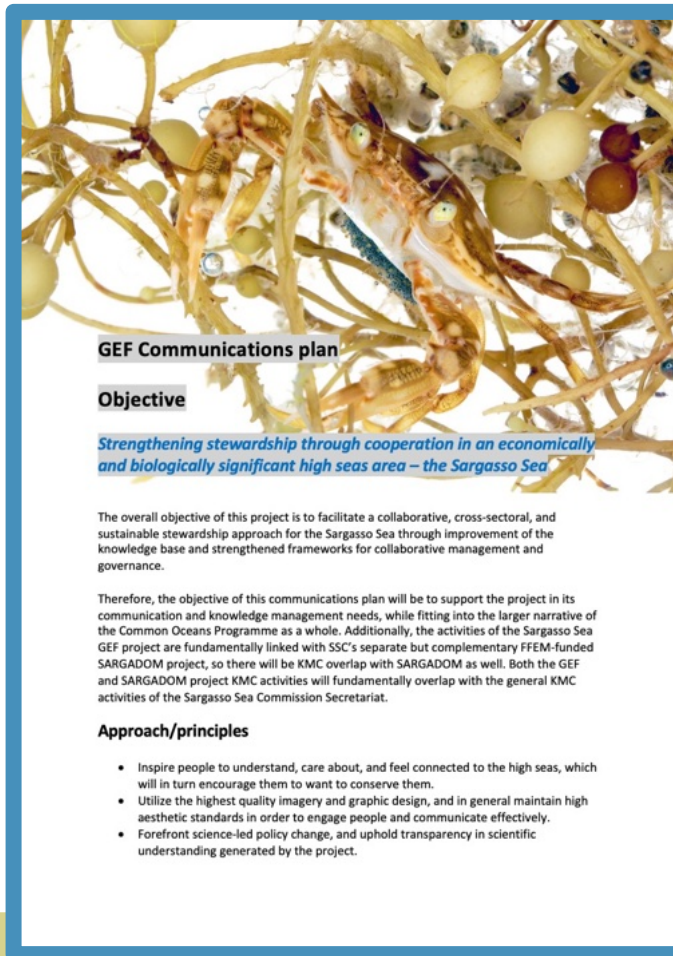
Communications, July 2024

Communications plan

- First version in Oct 2023, this updated version is more useable with more concrete ideas for knowledge sharing
- This plan combines KMC activities of the Secretariat, SARGADOM, and the GEF project, as they all feed into each other. We coordinate with the **Common Oceans Programme, IW LEARN, and the UN ocean decade**

The Sargasso Sea is a unique and iconic high seas ecosystem, worthy of protection due to its inherent ecological value, as well as the ecosystem services it provides.

- Inspire people to feel connected to and care about the high seas
- Fore-fronting science led policy change; upholding accuracy and transparency

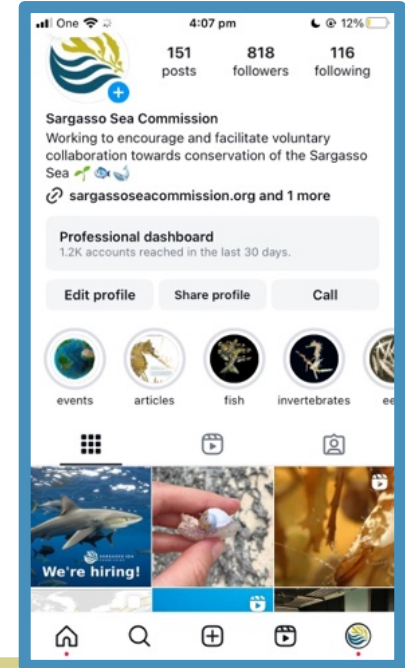
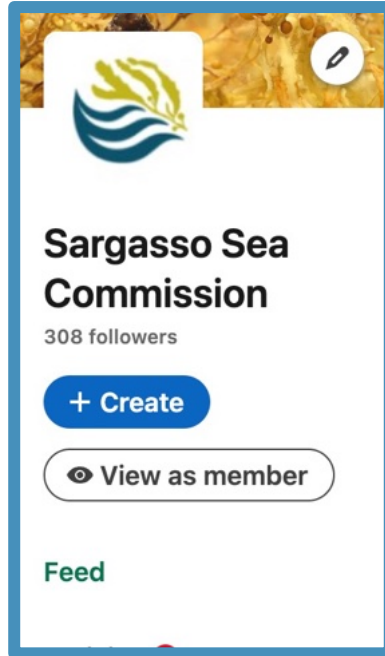
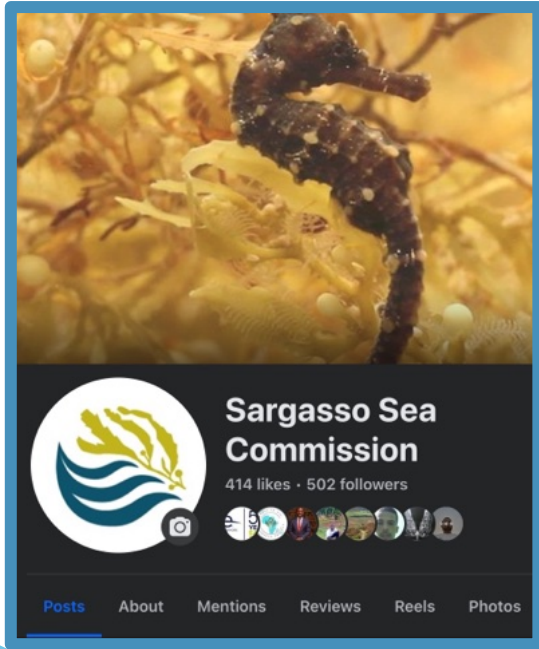


Communications

- Social media
- SSC website
- Participation in international events
- SSC newsletters, contribution to newsletters from other organizations
- Press releases/interviews
- Participation in BBNJ related meetings and IW:LEARN events



Social media



GEF-UNDP-IOC-SSC project:



Strengthening the stewardship of an economically and biologically significant high seas area – the Sargasso Sea

In June 2020, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council approved its latest Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) programme entitled "Common Oceans - Sustainable utilisation and conservation of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction"; the programme is financed under the GEF's International Waters focal area. One component of the GEF ABNJ programme is the project, "Strengthening the stewardship of an economically and biologically significant high seas area – the Sargasso Sea".

➤ Project website

- Storymap for Sargasso Sea info
- Reorganisation of pages for clarity based on feedback, keeping things up to date

➤ GEF page

- Updated with IW LEARN guidance
- Info about project, logos, fact sheet
- Document library
- Staff page

Published reports

Values from the Resources of the Sargasso Sea



Sumaila, U. R., Vats, V., and W. Swartz. 2013. *Values from the Resources of the Sargasso Sea*. Sargasso Sea Alliance Science Report Series, No. 12, 24 pp.

Click here to download [\(hi res\)](#) [\(low res\)](#)

Humpback Whale Research Project, Bermuda



Stevenson, A. 2011. *Humpback Whale Research Project, Bermuda*. Sargasso Sea Alliance Science Report Series, No. 11, 11 pp.

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- Designer contracted to design and format scientific project outputs in the same style as previously published reports
 - Several 'implementing partner reports'
 - The SEDA and the SAP

A number of reports are published/finalised already

Published online

- AI in ocean governance
- Inception workshop
- BIMCO shipping industry workshop
- SEDA structure
- SH engagement strategy

Finalised

- PSC report
- SH meeting report
- PSSA meeting report
- Bermuda joint meeting

Readout: International Shipping Industry Consultation: "Strengthening the Stewardship of a Biologically and Economically Important High Seas Area – The Sargasso Sea".

Introduction

As part of the ongoing GEF-UNDP-UNESCO-IOC Sargasso Sea Project, a shipping-industry focused consultation event was held at the London offices of BIMCO on the 5th of April 2024. Facilitated by NLA International Ltd, the consultation was attended by representatives from BIMCO's London & Copenhagen Offices, the IMO, including from their GloFouling Partnership Project, Intertank, CLIA, UNDP-WOMC, the Sustainable Shipping Initiative, iMarEST, and the UK Chamber of Shipping. There were several background briefings from members of the Project Team, plus the Sargasso Sea Commission Secretariat and Duke University's Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab. Although unable to attend this event, the International Chamber of Shipping, the World Shipping Council, Intercargo and the International Cable Protection Committee, have all undertaken to be part of this Project going forward. It is anticipated that more members of the International Shipping Industry will wish to join the Project as it continues into the future.

Aim

The aim of this event was to introduce the Project to the International Shipping Community and, as key users of the Sargasso Sea, discuss Project intent whilst highlighting potential opportunities for mutually beneficial participation. By engaging with this key stakeholder community at this early stage, the Project hopes to stimulate discussion on its various elements. The voice of the international Shipping Community will be essential in helping to determine appropriate voluntary governance and stewardship measures for all users of the Sargasso Sea, helping to deliver a collaborative approach towards the sustainable stewardship of this unique, iconic and globally important high seas ecosystem.

Background

The Sargasso Sea contains inherent ecological value and is a haven for biodiversity as both habitat and migratory corridor. Keeping the Sargasso Sea healthy and sustainably productive chiefly hinges on the balance between appropriate utilisation and conservation of its natural resources. This will be achieved by effective collaboration between all actors within its area undertaking conservation, stewardship, or commercial industrial activities.


Stewardship falls primarily to the Hamilton Declaration signatories, who balance conservation with sustainable use. This Declaration is a non-binding convention, collaborating with signatory governments and commissions, and international organisations to conserve the Sargasso Sea. The Hamilton declaration and Sargasso commission are a new paradigm for high seas governance, working for just over a decade so far. To achieve this conservation a clear understanding of human impact is required, together with knowledge of the potential benefits resulting from sustainable management practices, all within a collaborative and fair stewardship environment. High seas areas like the Sargasso Sea can seem to belong to no one, but their future state is inextricably linked to Earth's health tomorrow and the associated global benefits.

The Project



The GEF-UNDP-UNESCO-IOC Sargasso Sea Project seeks to strengthen stewardship of the Sargasso Sea Geographic Area of Collaboration (GAC). This area was intentionally drawn to remove all EEZs; it is a purely high seas area. An ambition of the project is to create a coherent stewardship approach, and the designation of the Sargasso Sea GAC avoids fragmented governance. The importance of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem has been recognised within the UK's Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) discussions as an area of significance, which is a premise for implementing conservation measures. This is seen as a 'flagship' project for BBNJ and may set the benchmark for future high seas stewardship elsewhere.

NLA INTERNATIONAL



SARGASSO SEA COMMISSION

Governance of High Seas Ecosystems: Big Data & AI

Final Report | 29 April 2022

Produced by:

NLA INTERNATIONAL
BLUE ECONOMY SOLUTIONS

Government Offices of Sweden
Ministry of the Environment

IOC/N

Academic publications

Product	Status/audience
The Setting up of the Sargasso Sea Commission published in ‘Behind-the-Scenes Insights into International Environmental Diplomacy’	Published in print
The Sargasso Sea Commission: An Evolving New Paradigm for High Seas Ecosystem Governance?	Published in Frontiers
The Sargasso Sea High Seas EBSA After Ten Years: Is It Still Relevant and How Has It Helped Conservation Efforts?	Published in Frontiers
High Seas in the Cloud: The Role of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence in Advancing High Seas Governance -The Sargasso Sea Prototype	Accepted by Frontiers
The Cost of Neglecting the Sargasso Sea	Accepted by IJMCL

Newsletter



- **Released quarterly**
- Audience: longtime supporters of SSC, and informed public
- 8 newsletters since Oct 2022
- Average open rate of 60%

Other activities

- Publications – IUCN, GOBI, GEF, IW LEARN, Nonsuch Expeditions, Mission Blue, Royal Gazette
- Talks/interviews – Bermuda Broadcasting Company, WMU, Explorers Club, BUEI, BHS, Beastly Business project
- Exhibit – BUEI
- Internship programme?

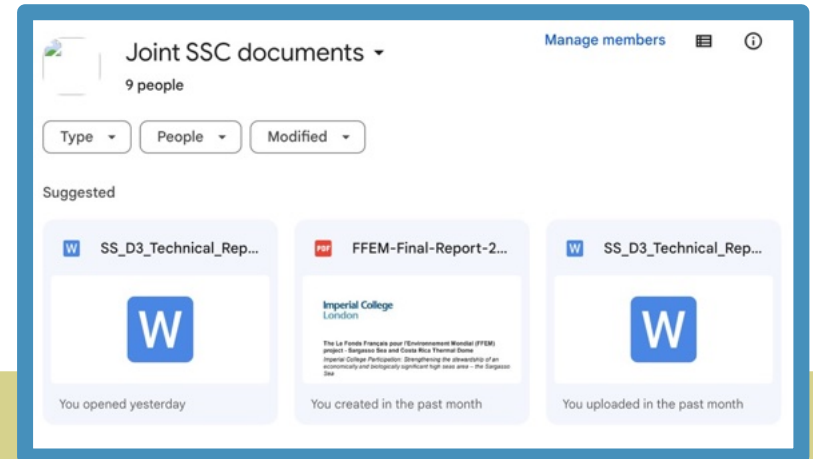
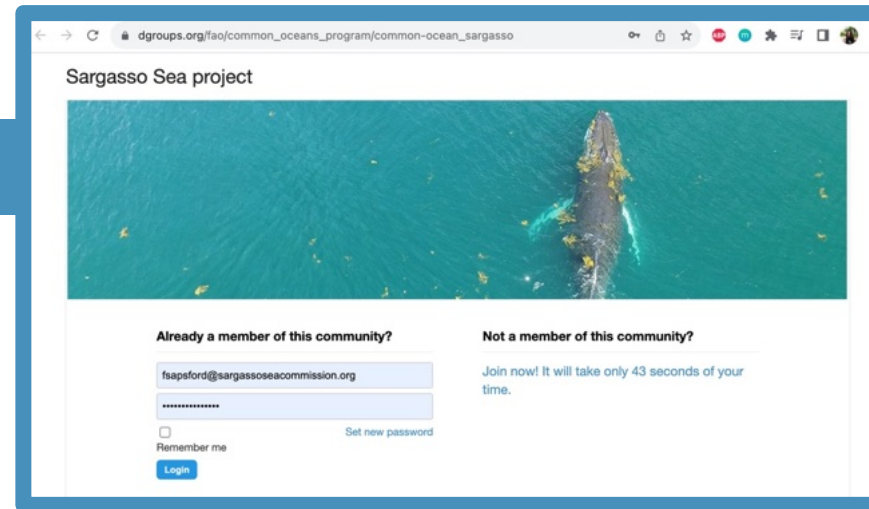


Events

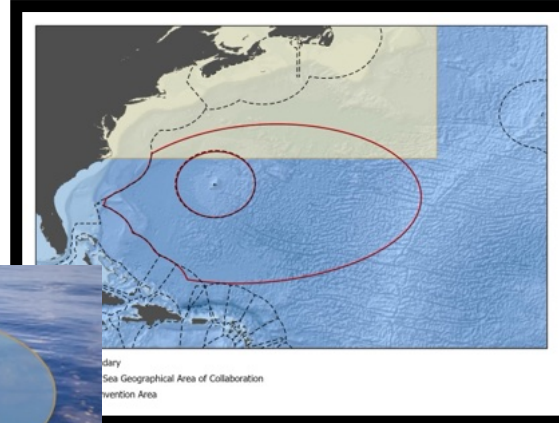
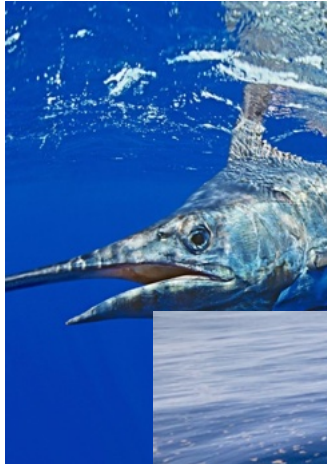


Knowledge management

- Knowledge sharing with the GCP, other child projects
- IW:LEARN experience and results notes, best practices/lessons learned
- Management of files and relevant resources
- Assisting with drafting, formatting, facilitating commenting and editing and dissemination of final products related to the SEDA, SAP, etc.
- Information packages for policy makers – high level summaries, highlights of important info, digestible



Knowledge products



Facilitating a collaborative, cross-jurisdictional stewardship of the Sargasso Sea.

A high seas ecosystem that has significant cultural, scientific, and socio-economic value, including whaling, fishing, plastics and

The Sargasso Sea Commission has been established to manage this fragile ecosystem through partnerships. At the end of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sargasso Sea will be agreed by the Commission. An comprehensive synthesis of information.

STAKEHOLDERS

The project are supported by Duke University, Bermuda Institute of Oceanography, Imperial College London, and the project is separate but related to the SARGADOM project.

COMPONENTS

Gather knowledge - develop a socio-ecosystem diagnostic analysis (SEDA) for the Sargasso Sea - the first of its kind for a high seas system.

Set up a collaborative stewardship mechanism - develop a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) to lay out how conservation aims can be achieved, which will be endorsed by stakeholders. This will be followed by a road-map for implementing the SAP.


Capture lessons learned - share knowledge gained during the project to strengthen stewardship in other areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).

LEARN MORE

sargassoseacommission.org



Knowledge products



Consultation paper for internal use only

Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas in the High Seas: Outcome of the IMO PSSA workshop, San José, Costa Rica

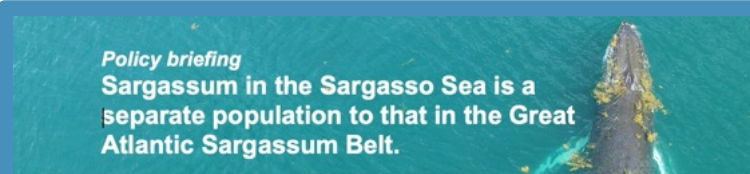
The Sargasso Sea Commission co-hosted a workshop on Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) on the high seas from November 13-15 in San José, Costa Rica together with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Maritime University (WMU), and MarViva.

IMO has a mandate to designate PSSAs - although so far none have been on the high seas beyond 200nm. PSSA designation is a tool to reduce the impacts of international shipping on an area that is deemed to have cultural, ecological, or scientific importance.

The workshops explored the criteria for PSSA designation, the procedures for making applications for such designations and recent practice in such designations and their Associated Protective Measures (APMs). The workshop ended with working groups looking at the possible applicability to the Sargasso Sea and the Thermal Dome.

Making a proposal

- A PSSA designation is given to an area through IMO because of its significance for recognized ecological, socio-economic, or scientific attributes – where such attributes may be vulnerable to damage by international shipping.
- Associated Protective Measures (APMs) provide mitigation for identified negative impacts.
- Successful PSSAs must meet at least one criterion from the following categories: ecological significance, scientific/educational significance, and social, cultural, and economic significance.



Policy briefing

Sargassum in the Sargasso Sea is a separate population to that in the Great Atlantic Sargassum Belt.

What is Sargassum?

Sargassum is a genus of golden brown macroalgae (seaweed), which has numerous species throughout the world's oceans, however only two are designed to live on the high seas. *Sargassum natans* and *Sargassum fluitans* never attach to the bottom at any point in their life cycle, reproduce by fragmentation, and spend their whole lives floating on the surface of the ocean and gathering into windrows and vast mats according to currents and winds.

What is the Sargasso Sea ecosystem?

The Sargasso Sea is an area of the North-West Atlantic bounded by the currents of the North Atlantic Gyre.

The basis of this iconic high seas ecosystem is floating Sargassum. Sargassum supports its own endemic rafting community and acts as critical developmental habitat for many species of fishes and sea turtles, which in turn attracts larger fishes which feed beneath the mats. The Sargasso Sea also acts as a significant carbon sink, representing ca. 7% of the global biological carbon pump, and this is aided by the sinking of Sargassum to the deep sea when it reaches the end of its life cycle.

The Sargasso Sea is critical for many species and provides irreplaceable ecosystem services to human populations.




Image: Wikimedia Commons

Plans

Knowledge products

- Summaries of implementing partner reports
- Existing institutional arrangements on the Sargasso Sea

Experience notes


- Adapting TDA>SAP to SEDA and how the SEDA can inform the BBNJ process
- PSSA process for high seas
- Stakeholder engagement approach of Sargasso Sea project



Upcoming events

- Fisheries stakeholder meeting
- IUCN high seas ABMTs workshop
- IWC
- High seas symposium 2025
- UNOC 2025



An aerial photograph of a whale swimming in clear, turquoise ocean water. The whale's back is covered in bright yellow seaweed. The whale is oriented vertically, with its head at the top and its tail at the bottom. The water is filled with small, white, shimmering spots, likely sunlight reflecting off the surface. The overall scene is serene and captures a natural moment in the ocean.

Thank you!
Questions?