

New study suggests seaweed influx will continue in Florida

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The clumps of brown seaweed that smell like rotten eggs and are causing disruptions along Florida's Atlantic beaches won't be going away anytime soon, a new study released Thursday has found.

The University of South Florida report suggests the pungent, slimy seaweed, known as sargassum, is on track to continue to be just as bad for [coastal regions](#) as in the past.

The university's team, which includes Mengqiu Wang, discovered in [satellite images](#) that areas of this type of seaweed stretched across [surface waters](#) from West Africa to the Gulf of Mexico. They estimated that it weighed more than 20 million tons.

"The oceans are connected across the regions and we are going to see more sargassum coming to the Florida coast," Wang said. "It is not fatal, it is not poisoning tides; it is more of a public nuisance and can cause some public health concerns."

The study says sargassum, which turns clear sea water brown, has been an issue since 2011. Apart from 2013, each year the seaweed returned in larger quantities on beaches throughout the Caribbean and Mexico. Some places, such as Miami Beach, have had so much sargassum at times that swimmers are blocked from entering the water.

The thick seaweed also releases hydrogen sulfide gas that smells like [rotten eggs](#), which can cause problems for those with respiratory issues.

Donald Johnson, a senior research scientist on ocean circulation at the University of Southern Mississippi, said satellite usage is one of the only ways to capture the enormous scale of sargassum.

Wang said that climate change also played a role. Rising seawaters and an increase in nutrients from river sources, such as the Amazon River, make its way to the sea, causing the sargassum to increase in growth.

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