

Responding to a sargassum influx in the Cayman Islands

Here's what you need to know

Sargassum is a natural seaweed that floats in the Atlantic Ocean.

It's an important home for marine life, like fish and sea turtles.

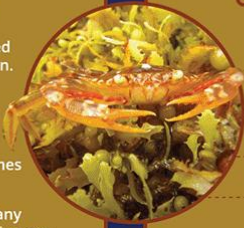
It's only a problem when it comes ashore in massive amounts.

This is not a localized issue. Many countries in the Caribbean region are experiencing much higher influxes of sargassum.

It is an issue that appears to be worsening and scientists believe that climate change and increased nutrient input into the ocean may be causal factors.

Permission is required to bring heavy equipment on to the beach and/or to clear sargassum by mechanical means.

Clearing of sargassum on turtle or booby nesting beaches requires DoE consultation.



What should you do?

Communication is key!

- Inform beach users about sargassum – manage their expectations.
- Direct beach users to unaffected or clean beaches.
- Review DoE protocols for sargassum removal.
- Monitor the weather before clearing.
- Be aware of stranded sea creatures in sargassum.
- Leave some sargassum for beach nourishment.



Keep in touch with DoE as forecasting models are in development.

Take care!

These actions cause serious harm to the beach.

- 1 Constant beach grooming
- 2 Removing sand from the beach with sargassum can increase erosion and decrease stability of the beach
- 3 Heavy machinery used carelessly
- 4 Clearing or trampling native beach vegetation
- 5 Driving over turtle nests – consult with DoE to confirm if turtle nests are present

If my beach looks like this...

No action

required on this beach



- Leave the sargassum alone
- Let nature run its course
- Be patient – it will wash away or get buried
- It will benefit your beach – nourishment and stability
- Saves money and effort

Taking action?

Manual raking is the approach to take



- It is simple, low cost and environmentally friendly.
- Allows for public beach clean ups – community activities.
- Allows for the separation of plastics and other debris for appropriate disposal.
- Allows for the removal/separation of trapped marine life.
- Can be transported to designated disposal areas on-site using wheelbarrows and bags.
- Can be maintained by regular raking.

Work with partners

and plan a mechanical response



- Contact the DoE as soon as possible to agree a strategy for removing sargassum. Determine which beach cleaning company with the appropriate equipment will be used.
- Take a multi-stage approach – remove upper layers of sargassum with machinery without touching the sand, then rake manually (preferred) or run mechanical beach raking equipment.
- Clean high usage areas first and leave other beaches for nature to clean.

Do's & Don'ts



Clean in daylight

how do we DISPOSE of sargassum?

- Can be used as mulch or compost once rinsed with fresh water – rain water washing is sufficient.
- Try to identify an area on site for stock piling and drying. Use sunny locations for drying and decomposition.

what about... REMOVAL from shallow water?

! Sargassum is heavy when wet.

Different methods have been tried but are labour intensive and costly (e.g. booms, barges, vacuums). Results are mixed – stability problems, unloading issues and unwanted by-catch of marine life.

Do not remove sargassum from shallow water without consultation with DoE.



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