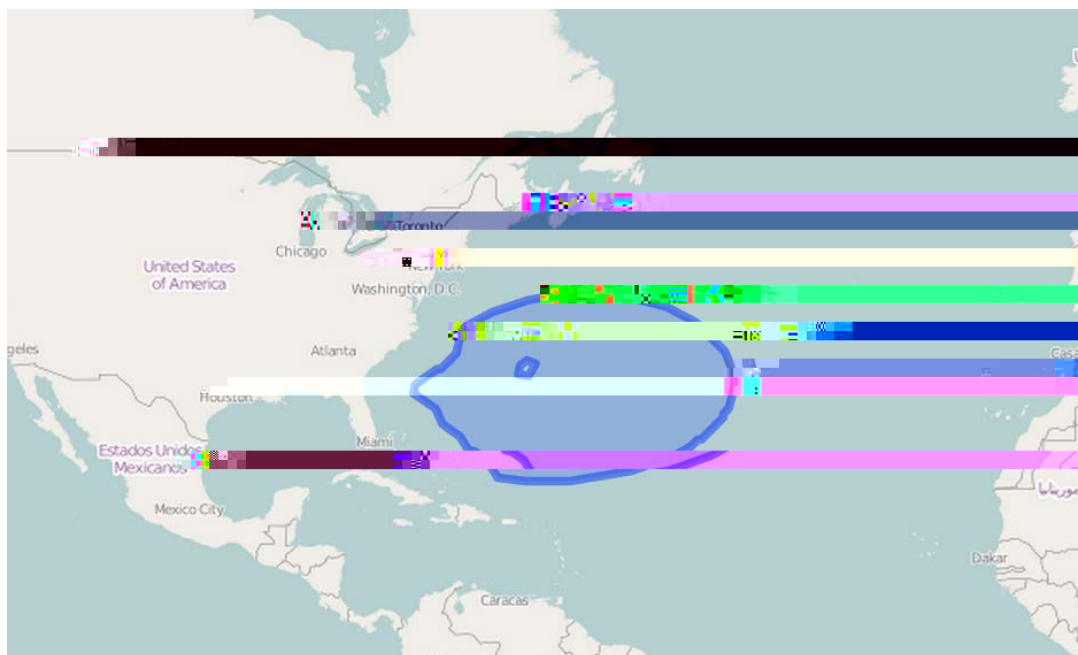


Chapter 50. Sargasso Sea

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1. Inventory

The Sargasso Sea is a fundamentally important area of the open ocean within the North Atlantic SubTropical Gyre, bounded on all sides by clockwise rotating currents (Laffoley et al., 2011).



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Figure 1. Source: <https://chm.cbd.int/database/record?documentID=200098>.

Named after its iconic Sargassum seaweed, the Sargasso Sea's importance derives from the interdependent mix of its physical oceanography, its ecosystems, and its role in global scale ocean and earth system processes. It is a place of legend and a distinct pelagic ecosystem based upon two species of floating Sargassum, the world's only macroalgae that spend their whole life cycle in the water column (holopelagic) which hosts a rich and diverse community including ten endemic species. Sargassum mats are home to >145 invertebrate species and >127 species of fish; the mats act as important spawning, nursery and feeding areas for fish, turtles and seabirds. In deeper water

occur in the Sargasso Sea and Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) make regular migrations through the area en route from the Caribbean to the northern North Atlantic. Many other species including several tuna spp., turtles, rays and swordfish migrate through the Sargasso Sea. It is truly an ecological crossroads in the Atlantic Ocean linking its own distinct ecosystem with Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe.

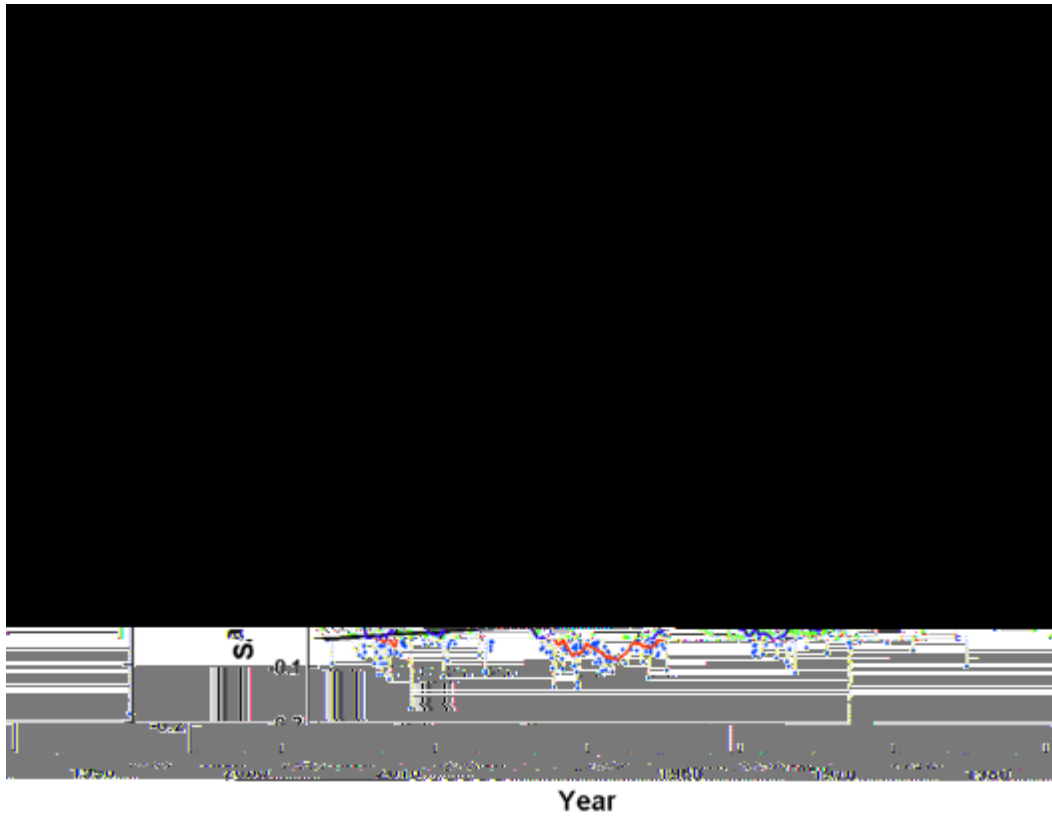


Figure 2. Time

4. Ecosystem Services

The economic importance of the Sargasso Sea is derived

12).

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