



# Promoting Biodiversity Net Gain in Nevada

Findings from an IUCN independent review with Newmont Goldcorp

There is a growing awareness among governments and the private sector that conservation and development need to go hand in hand. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) promotes the mitigation hierarchy approach with a net gain target for biodiversity in all landscape planning. By applying IUCN's Review Protocol on biodiversity net gain at different sites, both Newmont Goldcorp Corporation (Newmont Goldcorp) and IUCN are on a journey to explore the challenges and opportunities of scaling up such approaches across the private sector.

## IUCN – Newmont Goldcorp Collaboration

IUCN, a recognised global authority on biodiversity, and Newmont Goldcorp have established a three-year collaborative agreement to help the company meet its global targets to achieve no net loss in key biodiversity values, and net gains where possible. As part of the agreement, Newmont Goldcorp asked IUCN – including representatives of IUCN Member organisations and its expert commissions – to conduct independent reviews at select Newmont Goldcorp mine sites using the IUCN Biodiversity Net Gain Review Protocol. This protocol aims to help transform their operations to meet today’s widely accepted global goals for biodiversity and sustainable development.

The overall objective of the collaborative agreement is to review biodiversity management approaches, projects and lessons learned from Newmont Goldcorp’s experience in integrating biodiversity into its operations. This includes applying the mitigation hierarchy to meet commitments as well as provide recommendations for improving and highlighting experience to support the global conservation community.



## Newmont Goldcorp’s Biodiversity Approach and Commitments

Since 2014, Newmont Goldcorp has committed to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into its business. Newmont Goldcorp’s Biodiversity Management Standard outlines the company’s approach to managing and mitigating biodiversity risks, achieving no net loss and providing net gain, when possible, of key biodiversity values. All Newmont sites were required to comply with this standard by the end of 2016.

Newmont Goldcorp requires that all of its current operating sites conduct biodiversity risk assessments, and that new projects or expansions conduct biodiversity and ecosystem impact assessments. The assessments are used to develop biodiversity action plans, which provide strategic direction for conserving species of concern, minimising disturbances and restoring disturbed habitat. Sites with key biodiversity values are required to demonstrate that their action plans use a mitigation hierarchy approach and work toward the commitment of no net loss.

Newmont Goldcorp’s aim is that the partnership with IUCN will provide further insight into how the company can improve implementation of its biodiversity commitments and meet or exceed its biodiversity targets. The company has stated that understanding and managing the impacts of its activities on biodiversity, critical habitats and ecosystems – at every stage of the mine lifecycle – are essential for ensuring its operations remain safe, responsible and profitable well into the future. The collaborative agreement and independent reviews led by IUCN can help Newmont Goldcorp achieve these goals.

## Priority Recommendations

During the IUCN-led review in 2018, experts proposed several recommendations, including:

### Conservation policy

- Implement a pilot project that demonstrates how the Biodiversity Management System and Conservation Framework Agreement can deliver biodiversity net gain. Or in coordination with state and federal agencies, develop a demonstration project to showcase best practices for rangeland management and the linkages to the Conservation Credit System.
- Complete an analysis of the mitigation hierarchy for net gain, looking at the key biodiversity values identified at the Long Canyon Mine site.

### ELCo’s business case

- Draft a white paper for senior management and executives that clearly presents the value that Elko Land and Livestock Company (ELCo) rangeland management programmes generate through the incorporation of conservation and restoration practices at a larger landscape scale.





## Independent Review - 2018 Nevada Site Visit (Pre-Goldcorp Transaction and Joint Venture)

An IUCN-led review team visited Newmont subsidiary, Elko Land and Livestock Company ranches and the Long Canyon Mine in the US state of Nevada in August 2018. This visit included viewing two ongoing ranch operations, regional conservation projects, and reviewing aspects of the Phase 2 Long Canyon Mine Project. The Nevada ranch operations, regional conservation projects, and mine operations have since become part of a joint venture between Newmont Goldcorp and Barrick, which is the majority owner and operator. Management of the conservation programmes and partnerships for the Nevada ranch operations will be carried out by the joint venture in the future.



Newmont and ELLCo have historically worked with other organisations to conserve and restore sagebrush habitat in Nevada and protect key species such as the greater sage-grouse. This large, emblematic bird is found only in sagebrush country of the North American west. It nests on the ground among the sage, which provides its staple diet in winter. Sage-grouse are indicators of healthy, intact sagebrush habitat and conservation efforts of sage-grouse can benefit other species sharing the same habitat such as pronghorn and songbirds.

In 2016, Newmont signed a Conservation Framework Agreement with the Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife,

and the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – to create the Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation Program. The agreement established a framework for sagebrush habitat management on both public and private lands, aiming to achieve a net conservation gain for sagebrush species and ecosystems based on measurable objectives. The policy provided direction for Newmont’s mining and broader sagebrush conservation activities in the north east Nevada Great Basin region, as well as an approach to manage rangelands owned by Newmont to conserve biodiversity, while offsetting mineral exploration and mine-related impacts to generate conservation credits.

The State of Nevada has developed a Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan, which includes a Conservation Credit System (CCS) - a state-managed programme that quantifies conservation outcomes (credits) that Newmont has adopted to protect the greater sage-grouse and its habitat. CCS allows offsets for unavoidable impacts to achieve a net benefit for greater sage-grouse habitat.

The key objectives of the IUCN review conducted in 2018 were to:

- Provide Newmont leadership and staff with advice on the state and direction of the programme;
- Identify risks and opportunities associated with the programme; and
- Provide a learning platform for the IUCN-Newmont relationship.

The review team examined ongoing activities, including rangeland management, riparian and wetland habitat enhancement, sagebrush conservation and other actions to better understand how particular species, such as the spring snail, are affected. The team also developed a better understanding of the pros and cons of the CCS.

### Rangeland management

- Develop a comparative framework to test the economic and environmental effectiveness of the ELLCo grazing model - comparing and contrasting the various grazing options under the Bureau of Land Management regime, the ELLCo model and the non-grazing option.
- Communicate these findings both internally and externally to key stakeholders.

### Relict dace management

- Given the company’s unique position to make important contributions to conservation and research, establish a population of Johnson Springs relict dace in aquariums or a hatchery to supplement the wetland’s wild populations.
- Encourage the company to continue to engage in and share biological, ecological and hydrological research on the relict dace to support larger guidance on management of this and other desert wetland species.

### Maggie Creek Watershed Restoration Project

- Use the project to demonstrate the functional benefits of restoration, including riparian enhancement, and habitat benefits for potential credit use.
- Explore site protection considerations for crediting to achieve federal compliance on long-term stewardship beyond site protection.



## Summary and Path Forward

In addition to contributing to improved land management and conservation approaches, IUCN anticipates that its Members, regulatory agencies, non-governmental organisations and technical specialists will be able to use the review's findings. Independent reviews, such as these, help document lessons learned in the practical application of the mitigation hierarchy, often in varied and perhaps challenging situations. These lessons become invaluable markers for conservation leaders and mining company biodiversity specialists to improve conservation outcomes as more and more private sector companies develop and implement similar biodiversity programmes.

While the specific recommendations will be particularly applicable to the Nevada joint venture and in many cases Newmont Goldcorp, the review team believes that the broader lessons learned can be useful and applicable elsewhere. IUCN intends to carry out similar review exercises with other companies in the future, generating a growing body of literature describing current challenges and opportunities in applying the mitigation hierarchy.

An IUCN-led review team plans to visit other Newmont Goldcorp sites over the next two years, including Boddington in Australia in 2019. The team will first share its findings with the company but the goal is for the wider mining industry and IUCN Members to benefit from the insights and exchange – supporting the design and implementation of enhanced biodiversity conservation programmes.



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