From: Jeffrey Evans
To: kevin_doherty@fws.gov; melanie.murphy@uwyo.edu
Subject: FW: Barrick Article
Date: Thursday, March 26, 2015 2:39:49 PM

FYI

From: Len Barson
Sent: Thursday, March 26, 2015 2:29 PM
To: Amanda Rich; Amy Pocewicz; Andrea Erickson; Arlen Lancaster; Bas Hargrove; Bob Unnasch; Brian Martin; Cathy Macdonald; Christy Plumer; Chuck Warner; Corissa Krueger; Dave Livermore; David Mehlman; Garth Fuller; Heidi Sherk; Holly Copeland; Isis A. Stark; Jay Kerby; Jeffrey Evans; Jennifer Lamb; Jessica Wilkinson; Jim F. Berkey; Joan Degiorgio; Joe Kiesecker; John Sanderson; Jon Schwedler; Lisa Eller; Mark Kramer; Mary Hollow; Megan Kram; Michael Cameron; Missy Davis; Nav Dayanand; Nels C. Johnson; Sharon Baruch-Mordo; William S. Whelan
Cc: Tracey Stone
Subject: Barrick Article

From the Elko Daily Free Press

Barrick, Nature Conservancy sign unprecedented sage grouse deal

Interior Release

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO (AP) — An unprecedented attempt to protect sage grouse habitat across parts of more than 900 square miles of privately owned land in Nevada will begin under a deal Thursday involving the federal government, an environmental group and the world's largest gold mining company.

The agreement comes as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approaches a fall deadline for a decision on whether to protect the greater sage grouse, a bird roughly the size of a chicken that ranges across the West, under the Endangered Species Act.

Commercial operations, including mining companies and oil and gas producers, are entering into such deals in an effort to keep the bird off the threatened or endangered list because the classification would place new restrictions on their work.

The deal involves Barrick Gold Corp., The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management and Fish and Wildlife Service. It establishes a "conservation bank," providing the mining firm credit for enhancing critical habitat, in exchange for flexibility in future operations. It aims to preserve and restore more habitat than is lost through development while at the same time providing Barrick with more certainty as it maps out new mining plans.

"This is the kind of creative, voluntary partnership that we need to help conserve the greater sage grouse, while sustaining important economic activities on western rangelands," Interior

Secretary Sally Jewell said.

The agreement "strikes the right balance between economic development and conservation," said Michael Brown, executive director of Barrick's U.S. operations.

Similar efforts already are underway on a much smaller scale involving ranching operations in Oregon and Wyoming.

Scientists estimate the sage grouse population is less than half what it was in the early 19th century it inhabited an estimated 450,000 square miles of sagebrush across the West.

Growing threats to its nesting grounds include wildfires, invasive plants, livestock grazing, mining and oil and gas exploration. The risks have led land managers to consider new protections.

It's difficult to estimate what Barrick will spend on the conversation efforts but it "likely will be in the millions," company lawyer Patrick Malone said. He said much of the bird's most important range in Nevada is on private land.

"The bird benefits in ways that can only really happen through this public-private partnership," Malone told The Associated Press.

Michael Cameron, The Nature Conservancy's associate state director for Nevada, acknowledged the agreement may not be embraced by some conservation groups who argue against development of any lands with habitat critical to the survival of the sage grouse.

"Our overriding objective in this is to achieve lofty conservation results on the ground," Cameron told the AP. "Certainly, in a case like this where we have the potential to achieve conservation improvements on potentially hundreds of thousands of acres, it is the kind of opportunity, frankly, that we have an obligation to try to approve."

BLM Nevada Director Amy Leuders likes the advance nature of the agreement. She said, "It's certainly to the benefit of the sage grouse and its habitat for conservation actions to occur before other impacts from mining operations occur."

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