

Landmark pact to protect N. Nevada sage grouse

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Gov. Brian Sandoval hosted state and federal officials along with executives of a global mining company this week to sign what was hailed as a landmark agreement designed to protect Nevada’s sagebrush ecosystem and a chicken-size bird that depends on it.

The agreement with Newmont Mining Corp. covers roughly 1.5 million acres and implements the state’s conservation credit system – the cornerstone of Nevada’s plan devised in an effort to stave off a federal listing of sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act.

Janice Schneider, assistant secretary for land and minerals at the U.S. Interior Department, said the mitigation credit system is “the first of its kind” in the nation and may be used as a model for other Western states as they strive to achieve protections for the bird while allowing mining, ranching and other activities crucial to rural economies.

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