



# Promoting Biodiversity Net Gain in Northeastern Suriname

## Lessons and recommendations for the future

IUCN visit to the Merian Mine, Suriname (M. Sneary, 2024)

To achieve the goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) — also known as the Biodiversity Plan<sup>1</sup> — civil society, governments, and the private sector need to work together to conserve and sustainably use local biodiversity. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world's largest membership Union of governments and civil society, 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 Corporation (Newmont) and IUCN are on a journey to explore the challenges and opportunities of scaling up such approaches across the private sector. These site reviews may also identify opportunities for contributions to Nature Positive goals and to National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) in countries where Newmont operates.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, please see Biodiversity Plan for Life on Earth at: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>





An area of Newmont's restoration with natural forest in the background (R. Polis, 2024)

## IUCN – Newmont Collaboration

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IUCN, a recognised global authority on biodiversity, and Newmont, a global mining company, have established a collaborative agreement to help the company meet its global targets to achieve no net loss in key biodiversity values, and net gains where possible.

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

As part of the agreement, Newmont asked IUCN, including representatives of IUCN Member organisations and its expert commissions, to conduct independent reviews at select Newmont mine sites using the IUCN Biodiversity Net Gain Review Protocol. This protocol aims to help transform Newmont's operations to meet today's widely accepted global goals for biodiversity and sustainable development.

An IUCN-led review team has visited several Newmont sites during the collaborative agreement so far, including Nevada operations (USA) in 2018, Boddington in Western Australia in 2019, and Akyem in Ghana in 2022. This work is focused on supporting review of Newmont's programmes and commitments but also have the secondary benefit of providing insights and exchange for design and implementation of other biodiversity conservation programmes.

## Newmont's Biodiversity Approach and Commitments

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Since 2014, Newmont has committed to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into its business. Newmont'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. The Standard is applied to all new projects and expansions.

Newmont understands that minimising the impacts of its activities on biodiversity, critical habitats, and ecosystems – at every stage of the mine lifecycle – is essential for ensuring that its operations remain safe, responsible, and profitable well into the future. The collaborative agreement and independent reviews led by IUCN support Newmont achieving this goal.



Visit of a stream impacted by artisanal small-scale mining operators (R. Polis, 2024)

Newmont's aim in the partnership with IUCN is to provide further insight into how the company can improve implementation of its biodiversity management standard and meet or exceed its commitments.

# Independent Review – 2024 Newmont Merian Site Visit

In March 2024, a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Review Technical Team visited the Merian mine site in northeastern Suriname. The site is located at approximately 175 kilometres southeast from Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname, near the French Guiana border.

The key objectives of the IUCN review were to:

- Review Newmont Merian's biodiversity programmes and provide recommendations for improvement and future direction;
- Identify risks and opportunities associated with the biodiversity management activities and the land offset management program; and
- Provide a learning platform for the IUCN/ Newmont relationship

Suriname is one of the most ecologically rich countries, with over 90% of its territory covered by tropical rainforest. This forest is home to globally valued animals, such as jaguars, as well endangered species such as the giant otter and the South American tapir. Suriname's updated NBSAP for 2024–2035 demonstrates its commitment to preserving this unique heritage, while recognising that the national economy and livelihoods are heavily dependent on natural resources such as gold mining and oil production.

The Newmont Merian site is predominantly located in areas with primary rainforest, including areas previously degraded by artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) operations. Restoration activities therefore need to cover both disturbed mining areas and ASM sites within operational boundary.

With the granting of an Environmental Permit in 2013, the Newmont Merian mine has been implementing its biodiversity management programme and advancing work related to an offset commitment. The objective is to achieve 'no net loss' of key biodiversity values, which is in alignment with Newmont's Biodiversity Management Standard. Pilot projects are currently testing offset implementation requirements within the mining concession. Restoring the unavoidable impacts on the river system and the rainforests will be the main focus of reclamation and reforestation.

Several initiatives have been implemented with local stakeholders, in particular with ASM operators, to promote better ASM approaches and strengthen the involvement of the local community in restoration activities. Aligning the sites restoration goals with the ecological and land use needs of the community is key to the long-term success of restoration. The Newmont personnel at the Merian mine further intend to establish external collaborations to support these efforts, including with government agencies.

## Priority Recommendations

During the IUCN-led review in March 2024, several recommendations were proposed, including the following considered as highest priority:

### Develop an overarching No Net Loss (NNL) strategy

**Formulate** a stand-alone and integrated document that will provide a committed action plan to achieve NNL, aligning social, rehabilitation, and offset activities. Based on the pilot projects for the offset implementation, there is an opportunity to specify several key actions: the offsetting actions outside the mining concession, the biodiversity loss avoidance measures, and the restoration of ASM areas.

### Manage invasive species

**Engage** with appropriate botanical specialists to determine the risk that invasive species, such as mimosa, present to rehabilitation and offset success and develop an appropriate invasive species management plan.

### Develop a topsoil management plan

**Ensure** coherent management of this valuable resource for reclamation. Effective coordination between clearing and rehabilitation will help to enhance topsoil management, maximise the potential of seed survival and provide a good growth media for closure.

### Foster restoration-focused community enterprises

**Investigate** the viability of working with members of the local community to support the development of conservation-oriented businesses. In particular, support the creation of community-based enterprises that could leverage local knowledge in providing restoration services to Newmont. For instance, these businesses could provide services, including earthworks, seed nursery, target species planting or restoration monitoring.





## Summary and Path Forward

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Independent reviews such as this are important for the success of the biodiversity offset project and improvement of conservation approaches. While the above recommendations do not constitute formal audit findings, this review documents lessons learned, providing invaluable markers for conservation leaders and biodiversity specialists at mining companies.

## What happens next

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The implementation of the priority recommendations will contribute to the success of the Merian biodiversity offset project, following the application of the mitigation hierarchy, and the broader biodiversity management programme. The adoption of the KMGBF in December 2022, and the growing support for the 'Nature Positive' goal to halt and reverse the loss of nature, testify to the importance of applying the mitigation hierarchy in a robust manner. IUCN's latest approach to assessing impacts and defining and monitoring targets offers new opportunities to assess and design biodiversity management programmes with positive outcomes for the planet and people.

In this context, Newmont Corporation and IUCN have extended their collaboration for an additional three years. It is intended to further build on the lessons from the different Biodiversity Net Gain Reviews to strengthen Newmont's biodiversity approach and explore how a mining company can deliver high-integrity contributions to the Biodiversity Plan objectives in the sites where it operates.



Plant nursery for forest restoration in Merian Mine, Suriname (M. Sneary, 2024)



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