



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



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Visual Resource Management

Choice of Color

Part 4

Best Management Practices for Fluid Minerals

VRM BMP Principles

- The VRM system provides us with many basic principles and techniques to help reduce contrast. As they relate to Fluid Minerals and similar development, the 4 most critical are:
 1. Proper Site Selection (Part 2)
 2. Reduce Unnecessary Disturbance (Part 3)
 - 3. Choice of Color (This Slideshow)**
 4. Final Reclamation (Part 5)

COLOR

COLOR is generally the least expensive and most common design (or mitigation) measure used to reduce visual contrast.

VRM Principle: A strong contrast in color can be seen from a long distance.



This white tank is highly visible and attracts attention to the surrounding surface disturbance.

Match Colors in the Landscape

Do not select colors to simply match the exposed soil. Consider the overall dominant color in the landscape, especially when the background consists primarily of vegetation, not soil.

Avoid the use of “BLM Desert Tan” or “Desert Brown” because most landscapes are not this light.



Note how these desert tan tanks are highly visible against the darker sagebrush, even at great distance.

Note how much lighter an object appears when seen in full reflective sunlight.

Choosing the Appropriate Color

It is always appropriate to choose a color that allows production equipment to blend with the background. However, in highly scenic areas frequently viewed by the public, the proper color choice becomes even more critical.

It is not necessary to experiment with custom mixed colors. The BLM has done that for you with the creation of two color charts.



The desert tan color of the tank and pumping unit attract your attention and draw your eye away from the mountain scenery.

Standard BLM Colors

The “**Standard and Supplemental Environmental Color Charts**” are a good place to look for color options. These standardized colors are known to many operators and equipment manufacturers.



When choosing a color....

- Remember key observation points! Where will the equipment be seen from?
- What is the predominant color of the background landscape?
- Consider primary seasons of use, but never paint white to match snow.
- Consider the most common lighting conditions: front vs. back-lighted.
- Hold the chart up to the background at arm's length to help with color selection.

Selecting a Color Shade

Select colors one or two shades darker than the predominant background color, typically a vegetated background.

Squinting can help determine the best overall color choice.

Paint fades over time and becomes oil stained. Use semi-gloss paint, because it resists weathering and staining.



This compressor blends well with the vegetated background.

Constant improvement!

Experiment with colors found on the Standard & Supplemental Environmental Colors charts. Approve a few permits with a color choice you feel is best. Take a look at it in the field and over time. Stand back. Did the color work? If not, make adjustments to future permits. Document for future use the colors that were successful.



Experimenting with colors to develop the Standard Environmental Color Chart. For this background, which color would you choose?

Far Right –
Juniper Green

Make The Perfect Color Choice



This dark green (BLM Beetle Green) pumping unit blends well with the dominant pinion and juniper vegetation screening.

A Choice of Colors

Compare Covert Green on the left to standard Desert Brown on the right.



Partial Conformance?

The color you select may blend fairly well with the background, but if the site is accessorized with white well signs or silver electrical boxes, the site will remain highly visible.



These silver electrical boxes attract attention to what could have been two nearly invisible wells.

Partial Conformance?

All long-term facilities in a particular location should be painted the same color. An operator is typically provided 60 to 90 days to paint new equipment or buildings moved onto the site.



The variety of colors used to paint this building increases contrast within the site and attracts attention.

When it is specified that a building be painted a particular color, the requirement should specify the roof, doors, and associated infrastructure too.

Visual Simulations

Simulations can be used in environmental document documentation, public meetings, and discussions with the operator to better portray the proposal.

Simulation software even allows you to pick custom colors that you can have mixed at a paint store.



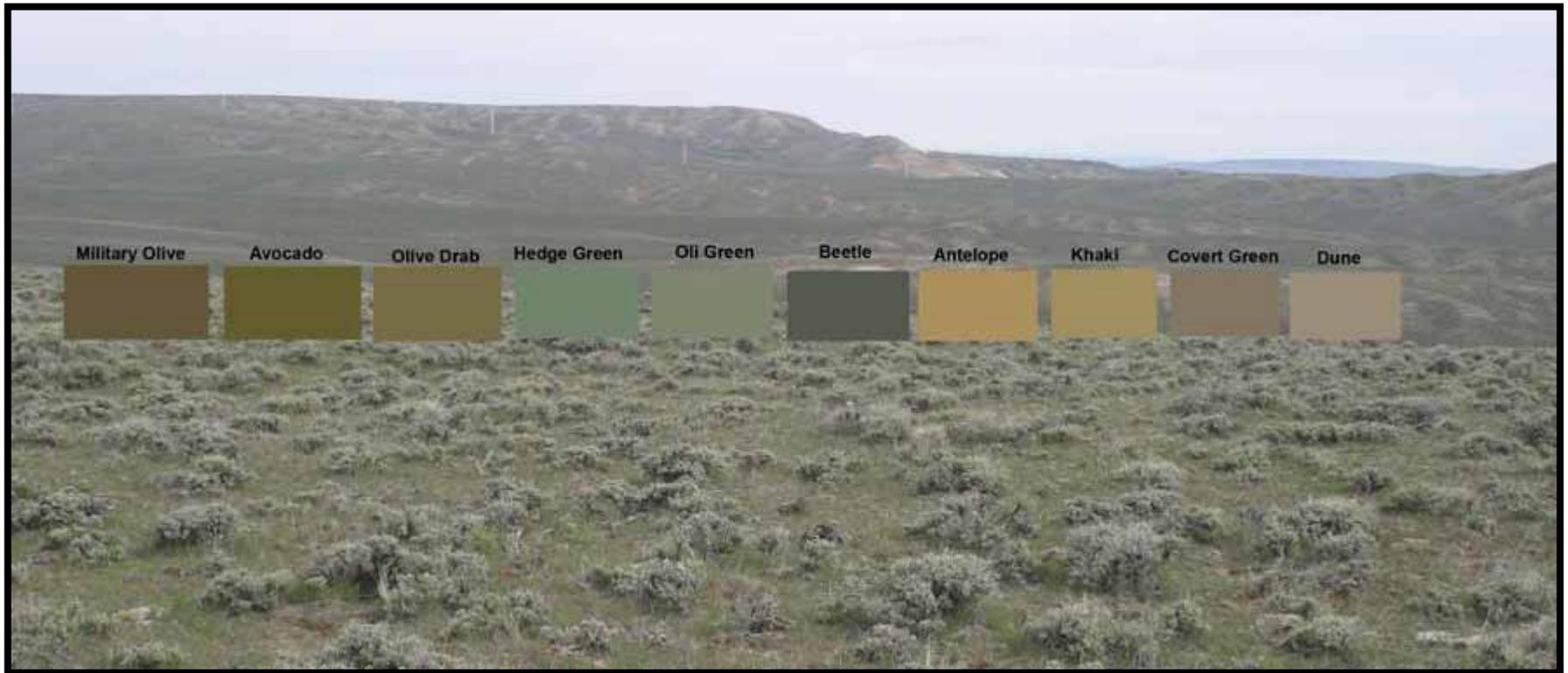
All four tanks and associated colors are visual simulations.

Which tank color would you choose?

Answer:
Second from the right.
Yes?

Digital Simulation

While simulations are a good starting point for comparing colors, the true test is actual paint on equipment. Experiment. Observe your work from the Key Observation Point, during the prime visitor use season, and under different lighting conditions. Did the color choice work? If not, try another shade at the next site.



Simulation

Taking it to the next level: Camouflage

Camouflage may be the most appropriate solution for some highly sensitive sites, if executed properly. Camouflage helps a flat surface replicate the “texture” of the landscape and vegetation.



With proper interim reclamation, this experimental camouflage may help this unit blend with the background.

The Disguise

Sometimes, what is called for is a good disguise, one that does not attract attention because it is commonly seen in the area.



Natural gas compressor station near a high value residential area.

Designed to look like a local barn so that it fits the local cultural landscape setting.

Highly Visible, Yet Unrecognizable for What It Is

In some environments, a good disguise may attract attention, but still may fit within its landscape context.



A disguised drill rig is hidden within the blue-and-white tower.

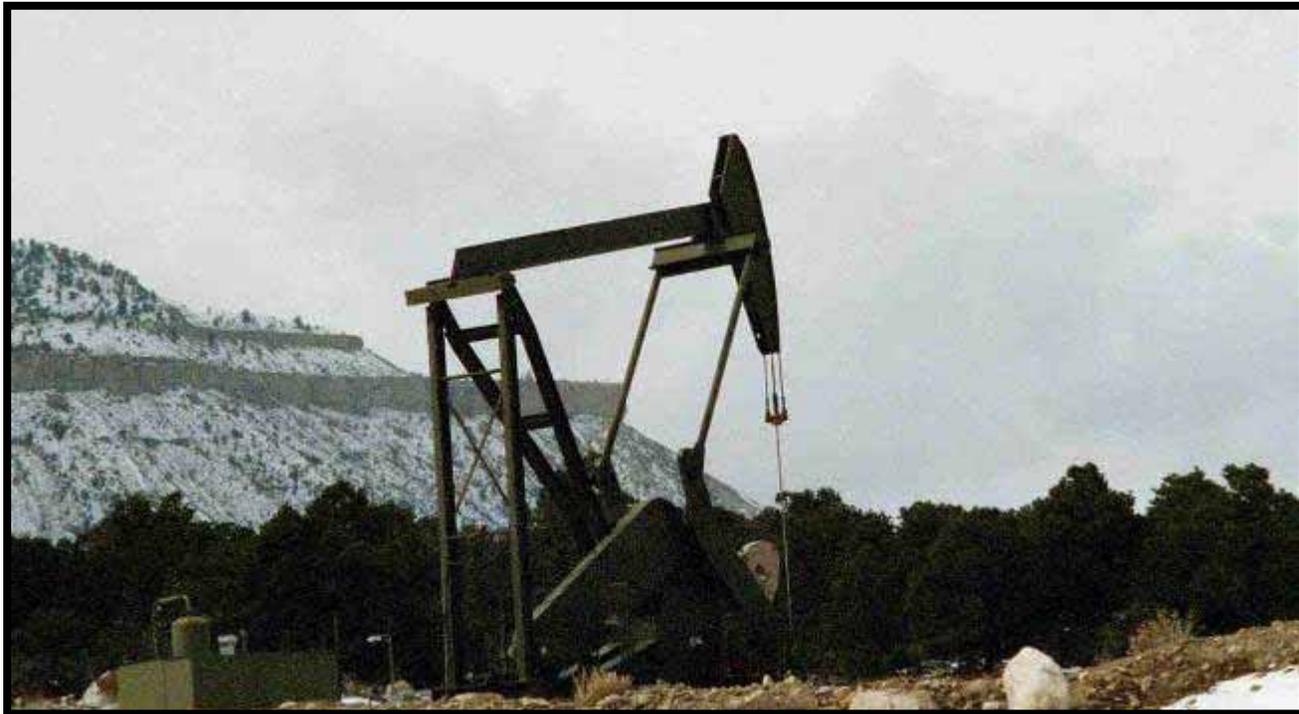
But probably not in this case.



BOTTOM LINE:

To minimize adverse visual contrast, work with affected parties to ensure proper color selection prior to the submission and approval of the permit application.

Minimizing adverse visual impacts can be a win-win-win for the operator, the public, and BLM.



**Continue on
with VRM
Part 5**