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

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

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

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.

Choosing the Appropriate Color

Always select the appropriate color, but use common sense. Custom-mixed colors may not be necessary for all areas. A standard BLM color selected from the Standard Environmental Color Chart (next page) may work just as well.

However, in highly scenic areas frequently viewed by the public, the proper color choice becomes even more critical.

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 Environmental Color Chart”** is a good place to start looking for color options**,** but other colors may be better.

1. Remember key observation points! What color is in the background landscape?
2. Consider primary seasons of use, but never paint white to match snow.
3. Consider the most common lighting conditions: front vs. back-lighted.
4. Hold the chart up to the background 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!

Consider colors other than those found on the Standard Environmental Colors chart. Experiment. 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 your custom blends 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

Look at the difference color can make….

There are two towers; can you spot the dark green tower as easily?

As you can see in this photo, color can be a very effective tool for minimizing contrast.

But, consider safety too. You would not want to make an electrical tower nearly invisible on a ridge frequented by low flying aircraft.

Also, the leading edges of moving mechanical pumping unit parts may need to be painted orange for safety visibility.

Make The Perfect Color Choice

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

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?

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.

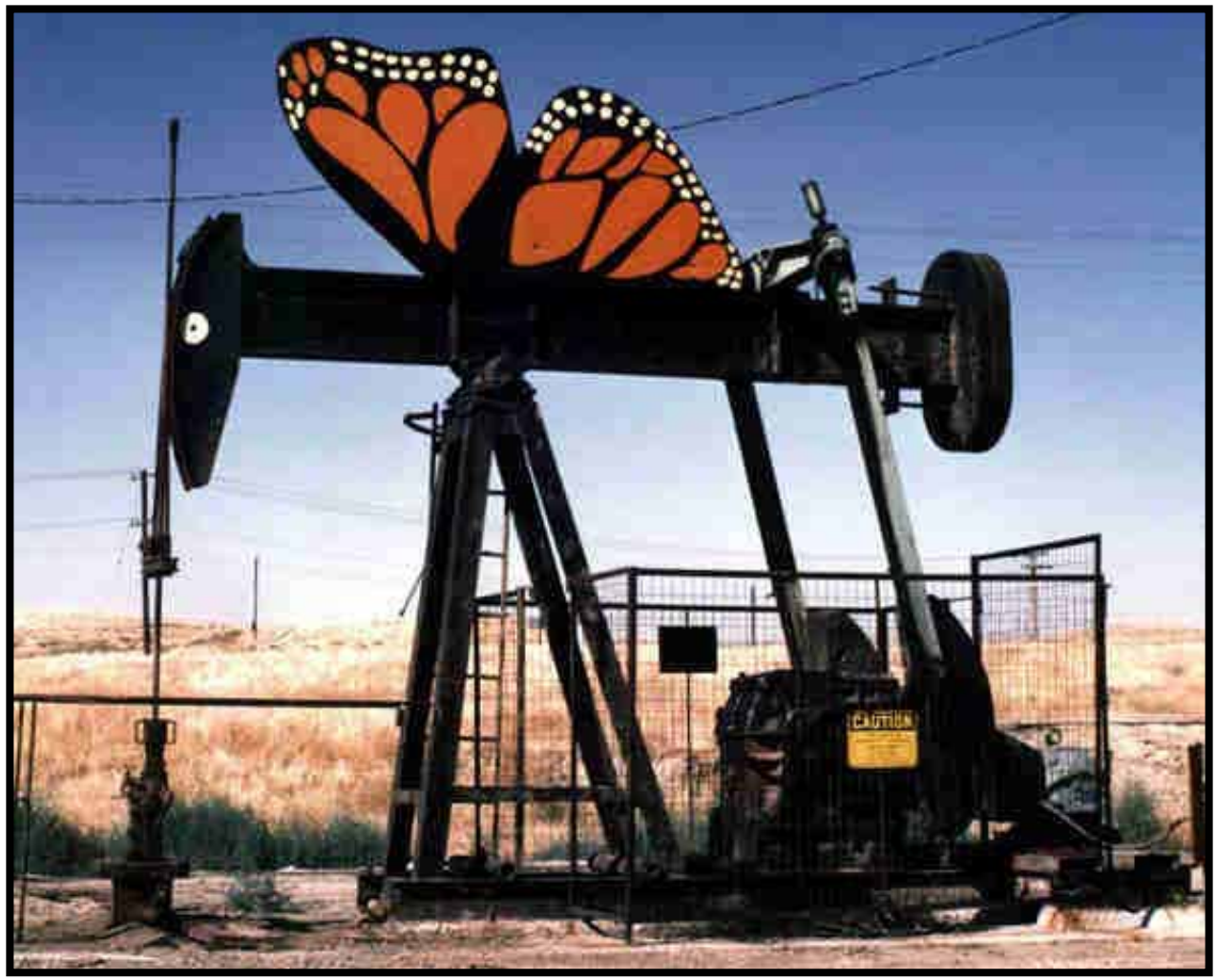
Designed to look like a local barn so that it fits the local cultural landscape setting.

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