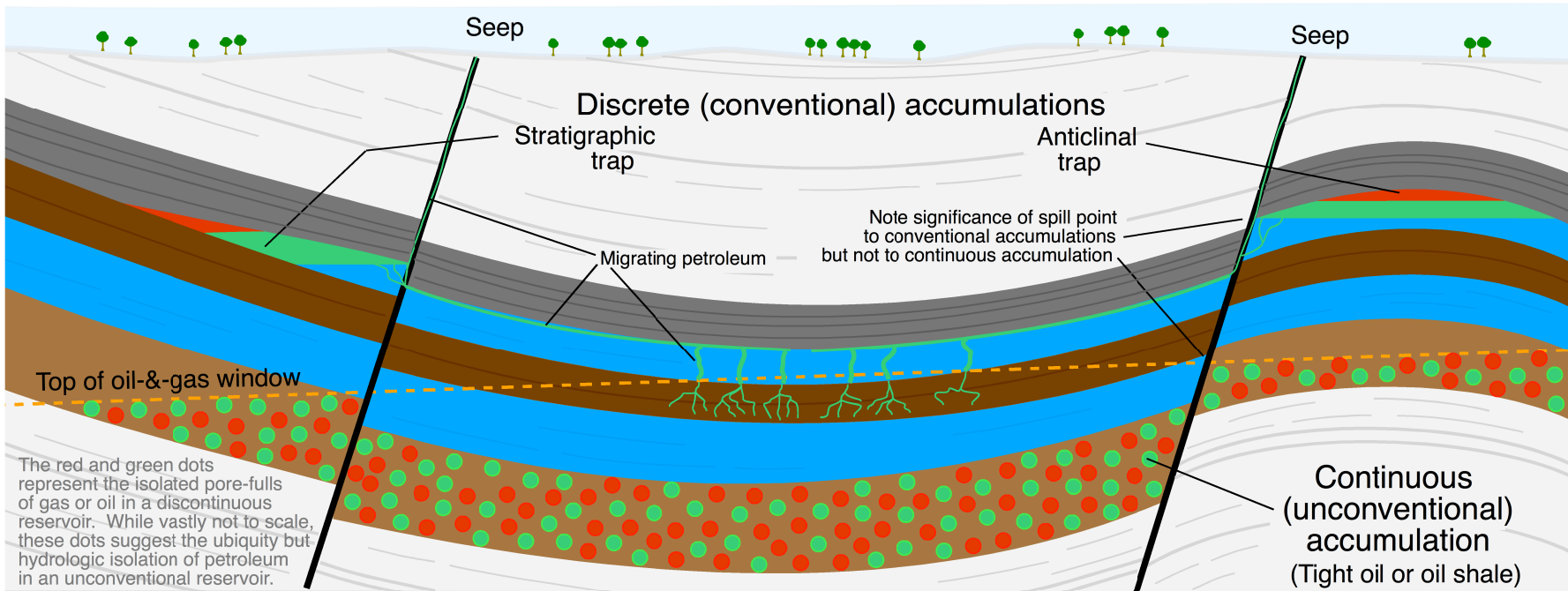


Conventional/discrete vs. unconventional/continuous hydrocarbon accumulations

Prior to about 2000, the petroleum industry exploited accumulations of oil and gas that had migrated through porous and permeable rocks to concave-downward traps. These accumulations came to be called “conventional” after the industry began to exploit hydrocarbons in less permeable rocks in the early 2000s. The latter accumulations are therefore considered “unconventional” and/or “continuous”.

<i>Historical categorization</i>	Conventional	Unconventional
<i>Overall geometry of accumulation</i>	Discrete	Continuous
<i>Significance of trapping geometry</i>	Great	None
<i>History of movement</i>	Migrated from source	Unmigrated
<i>Determinant of boundaries</i>	Permeability	Thermal history
<i>Generalized location</i>	Basin to basin-flank	Basin-centric
<i>Comparative lateral extent</i>	Smaller	Larger
<i>Nature of host rock</i>	Permeable	Little permeability
<i>Geometry of petroleum at drop-to-drop scale</i>	Continuous	Discontinuous
<i>Exploitation strategy</i>	“Drill and drain”	Fracking



This diagram was inspired by Figure 5 of USGS Circular 1118 (1995 National Assessment of United States Oil and Gas Resources), Figure 1 of Nordeng 2009 (North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources Newsletter v. 36 no. 1., p. 21-24), and Figure 1 of Kaiser 2012 (Energy v. 38, p. 315-330). However, all of those diagrams show the top of their continuous accumulation in the presumably porous and permeable stratum that hosts the conventional accumulations.