



A New Sky

One method for removing and replacing the sky in an image

Reality versus Artistic License

I am pretty sure that when
Monet painted these they
did not reflect reality.



What I Look For

I look for an image that I like. It needs to be a well composed and exposed image. The sky being the weak link.



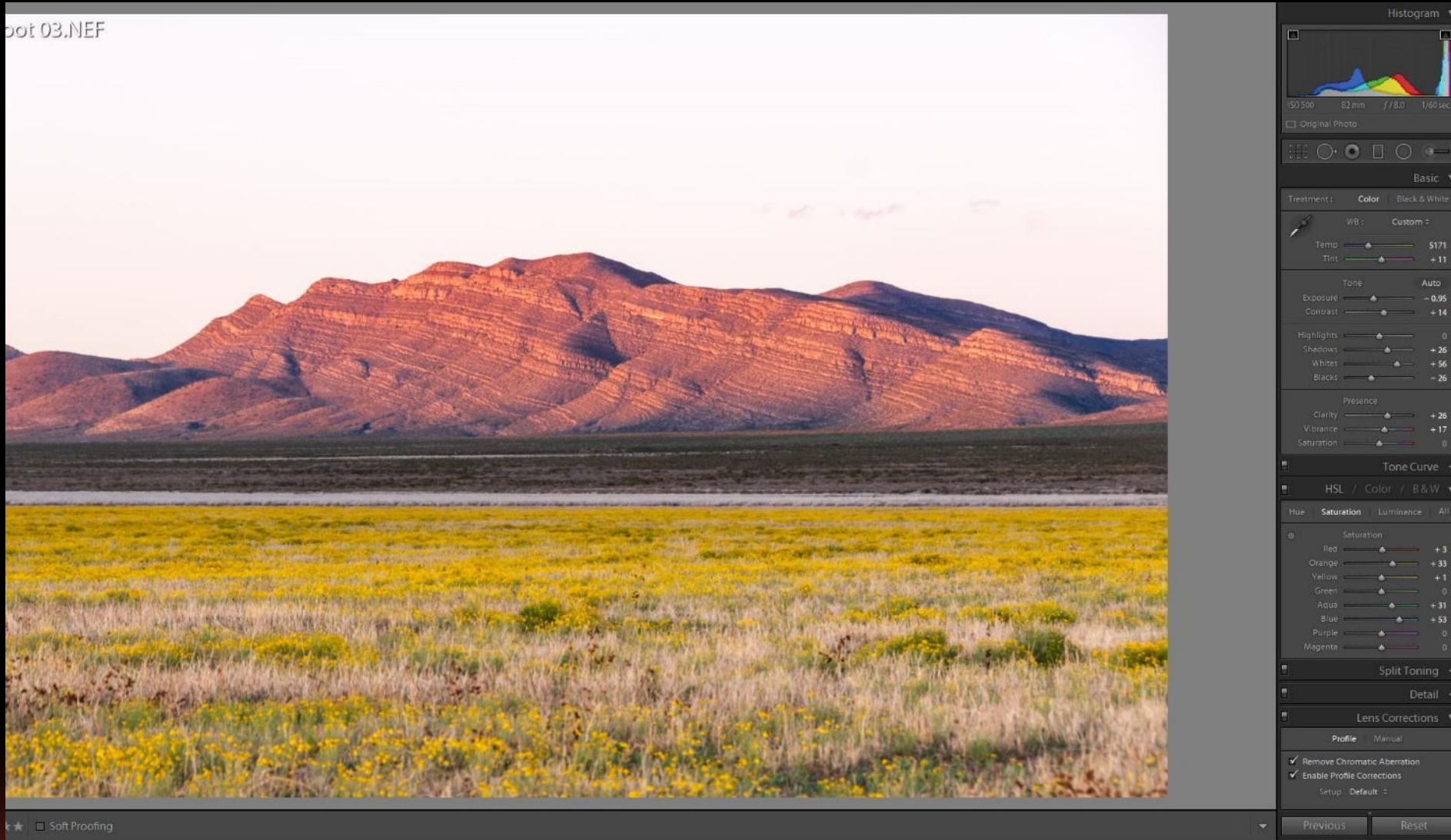
A new sky can certainly change the look and feel of an image.

What I
Look For



Main Image

Initial edits are made in Lightroom like cropping, color balance, exposure, sharpening plus others as needed.



The screenshot displays the Adobe Lightroom interface. The main image is a landscape photograph of a mountain range under a clear sky, with a field of yellow wildflowers in the foreground. The right-hand panel shows the editing tools, including the Histogram, Basic panel, and HSL/Color panel.

Basic Panel Settings:

- Treatment: Color
- WB: Custom
- Temp: 5171
- Tint: +11
- Exposure: -0.95
- Contrast: +14
- Highlights: 0
- Shadows: +26
- Whites: +56
- Blacks: -26
- Clarity: +26
- Vibrance: +17
- Saturation: 0

HSL/Color Panel Settings (Saturation):

- Red: +3
- Orange: +33
- Yellow: +1
- Green: 0
- Aqua: +31
- Blue: +53
- Purple: 0
- Magenta: 0

Other Panel Settings:

- Remove Chromatic Aberration:
- Enable Profile Corrections:
- Setup: Default

Technical data at the top left: pot 03.NEF

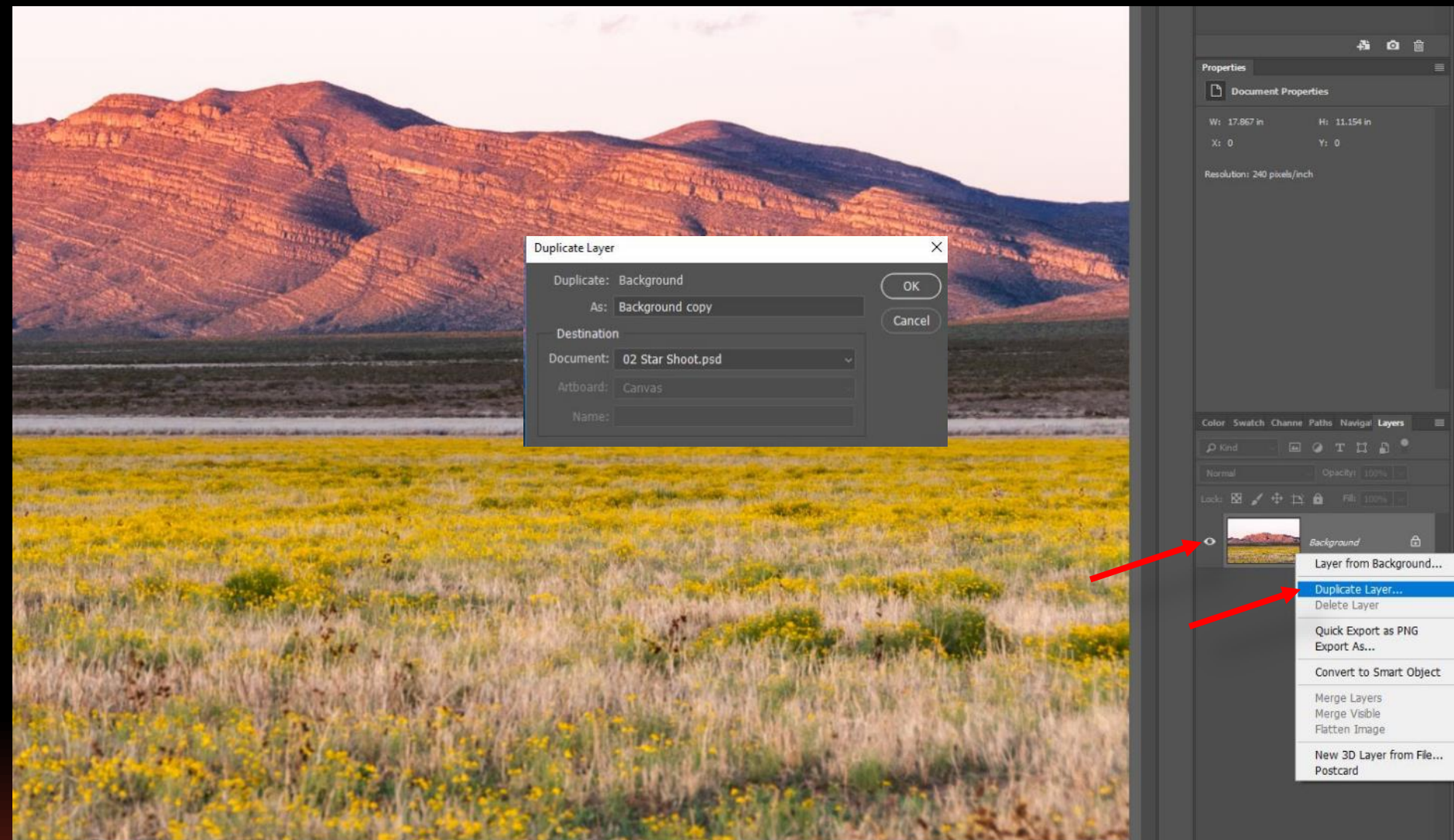
Technical data at the top right: ISO 500 82mm f/8.0 1/60 sec

Bottom left: Soft Proofing

Bottom right: Previous Reset

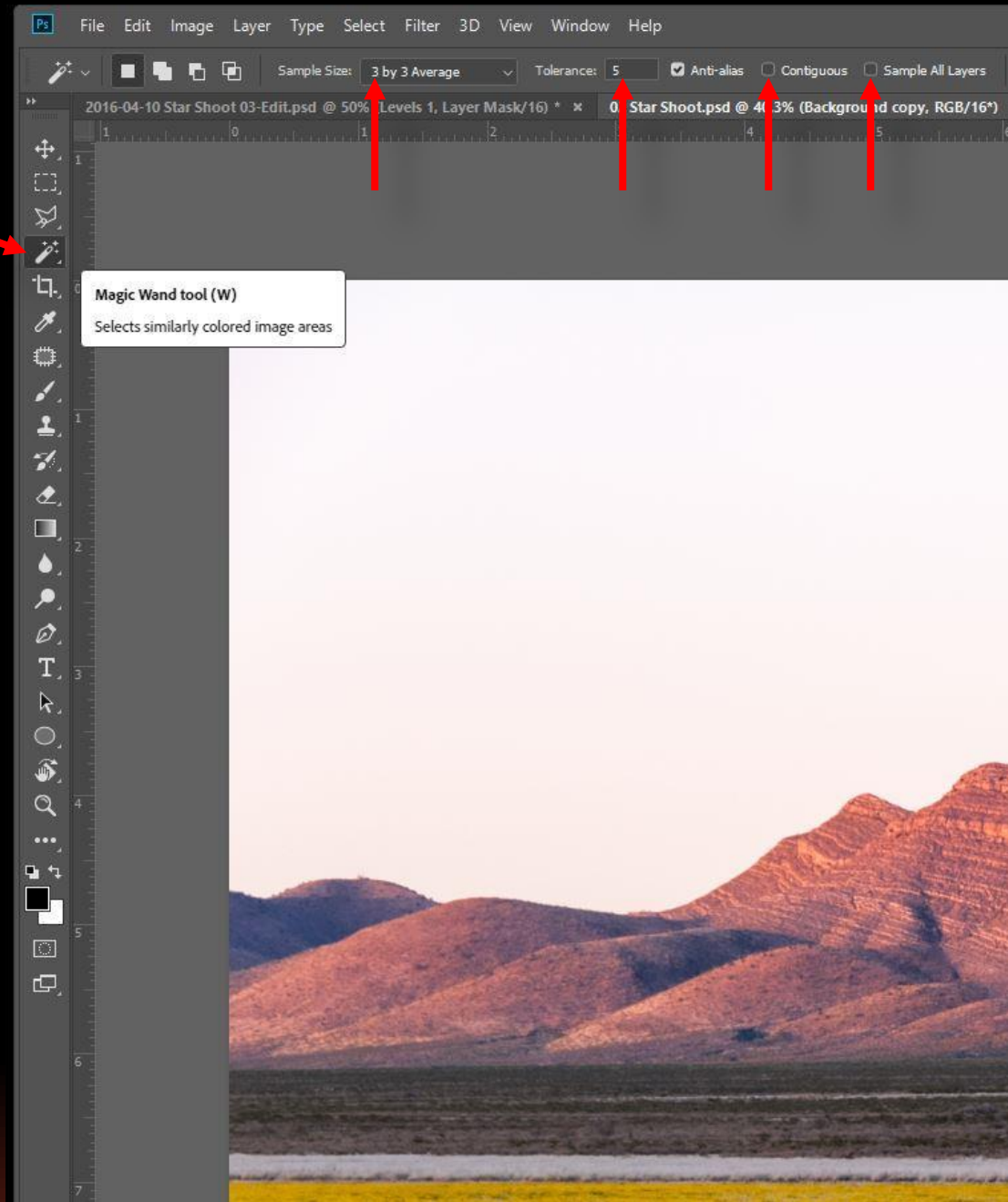
Main Image

- Once in Photoshop first make a copy of the main image.
- Second is to turn off the Background by clicking on the "eye".



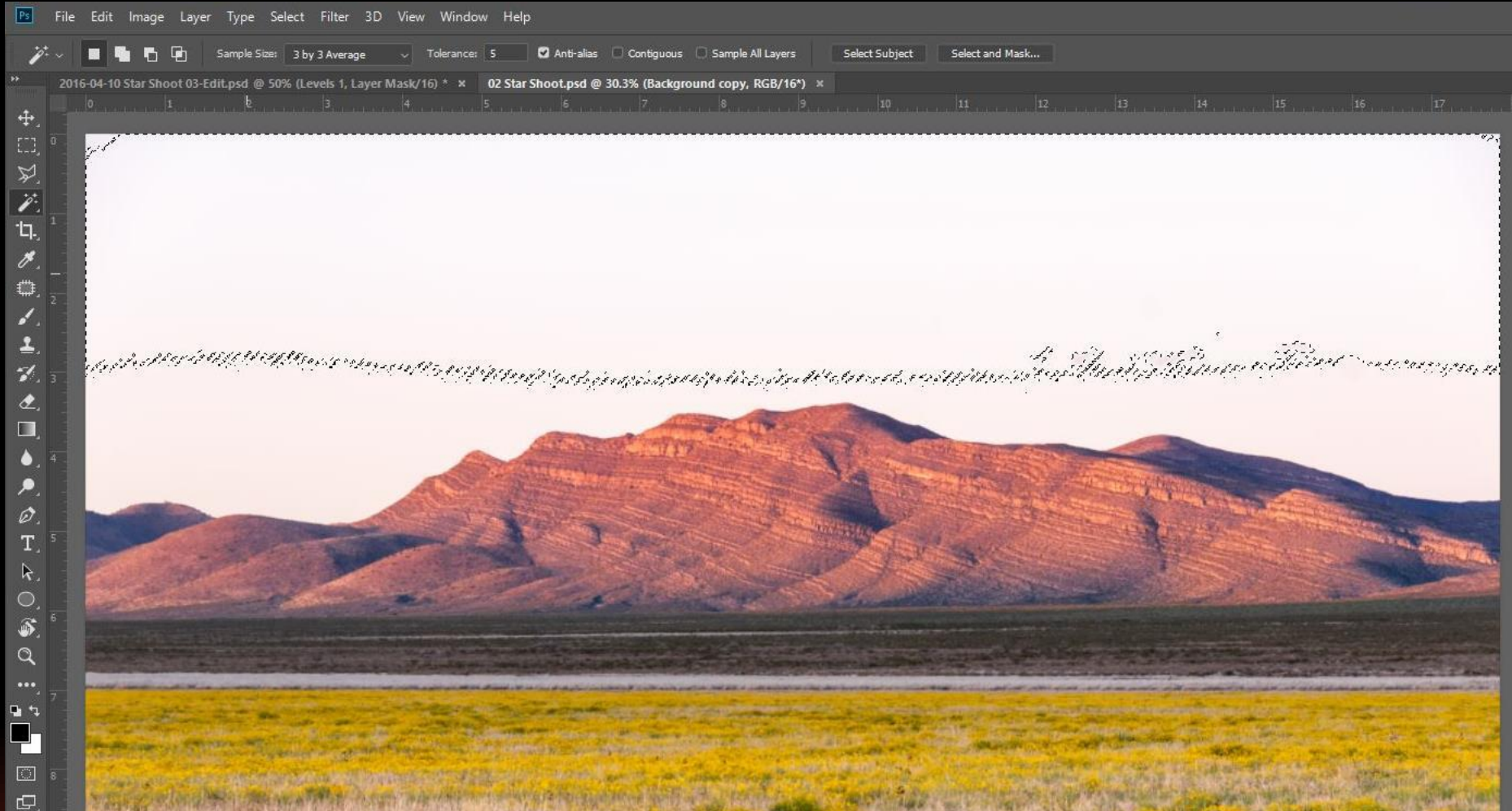
Selecting the Sky

- Select the existing sky by using the Magic Wand tool.
- I use a 3 by 3 average.
- Tolerance is set at 5, a bigger number will select a wider range.
- Contiguous is off to pick similar areas in photo. You may want it on depending on the results.
- Sample All Layers is off as I just want to work on this one layer.



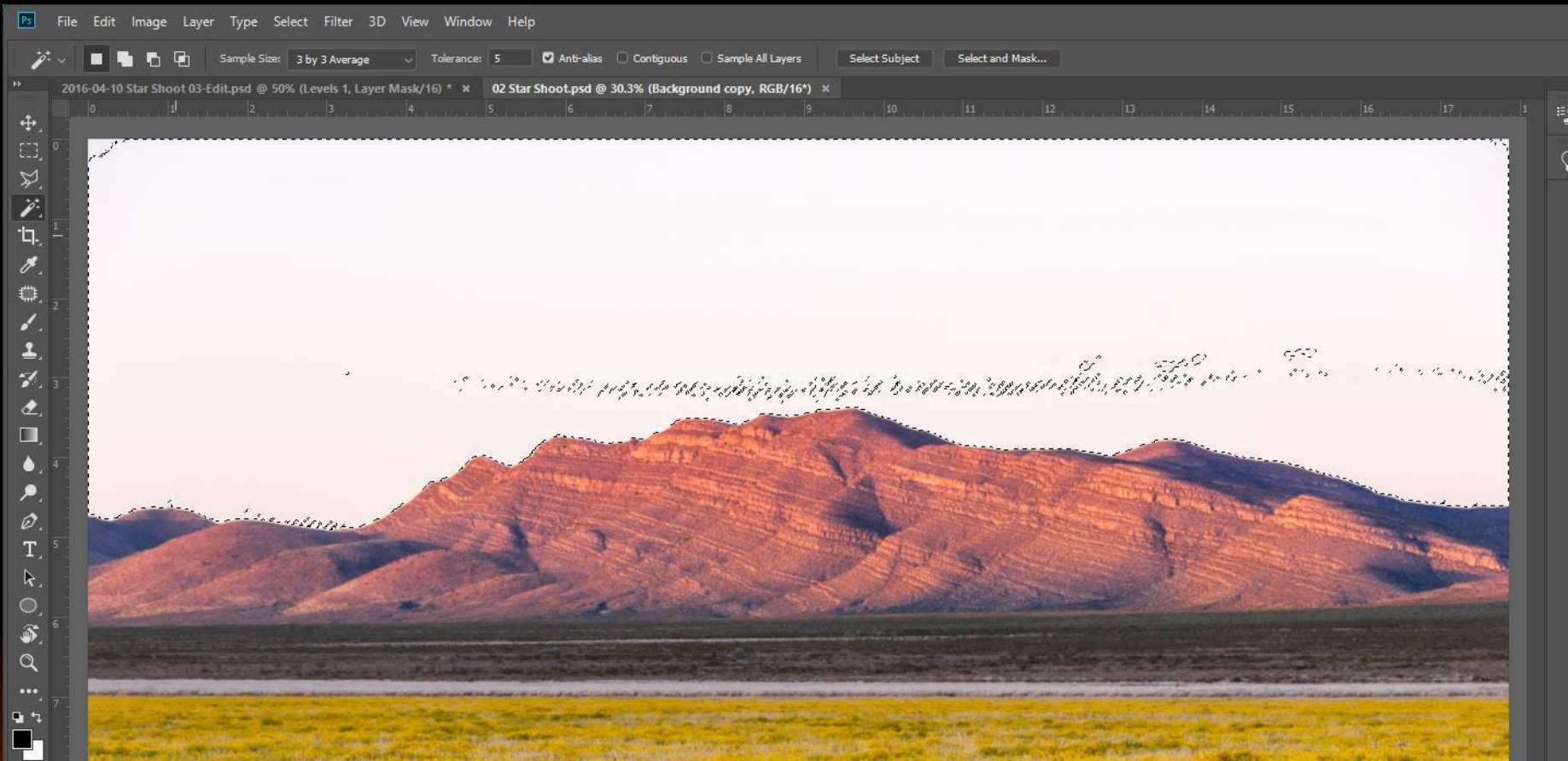
Selecting the Sky

- Clicking in a typical spot in the sky all similar pixels are selected.
- A lot of the sky is selected but you need more.



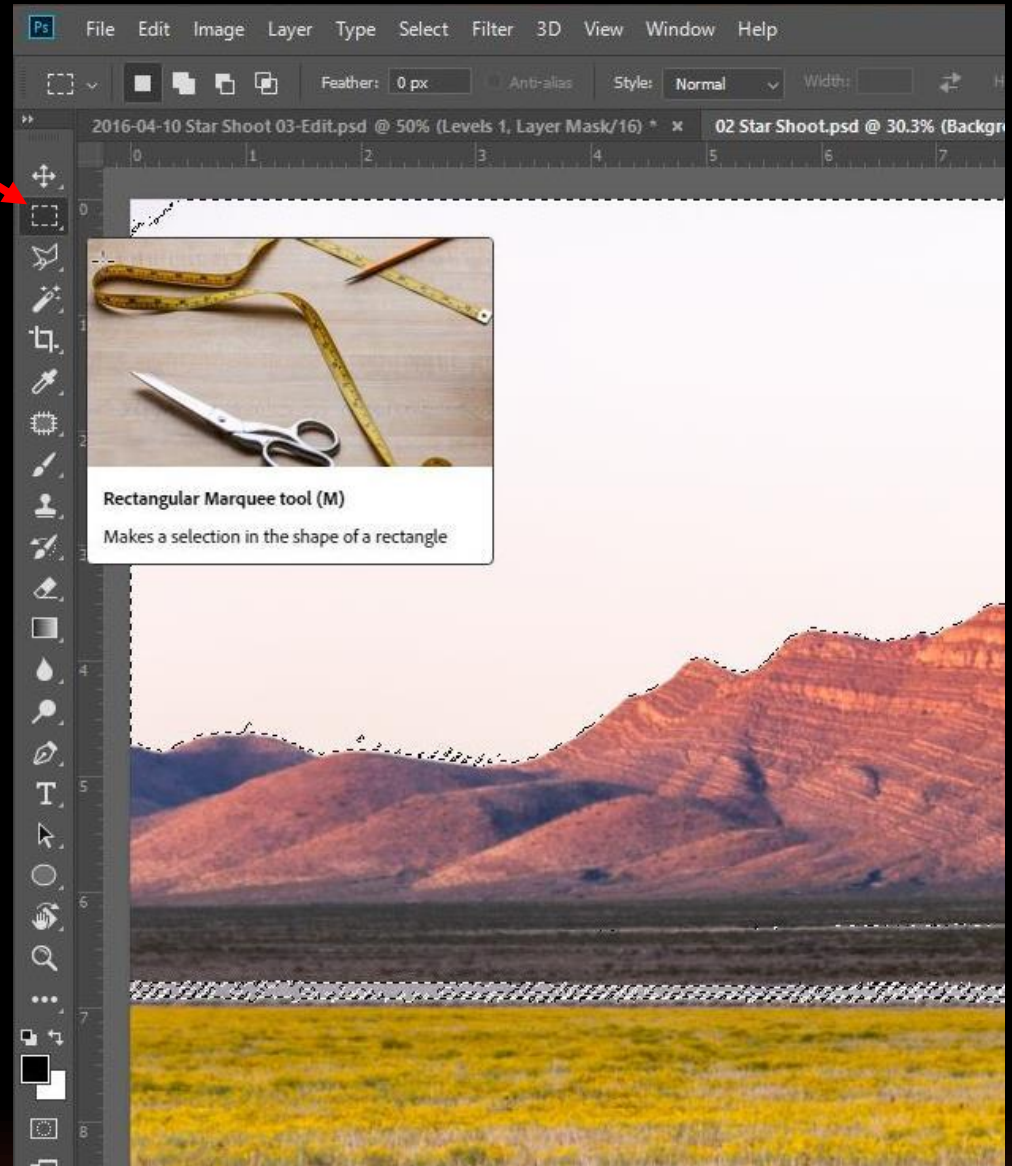
Adding Selecting the Sky

- To add to selected area put the cursor in an unselected area, hold the Shift key down & Click the left mouse button. That adds areas similar to that spot.
- Repeat as needed looking out for odd spots selected where you don't want them selected.



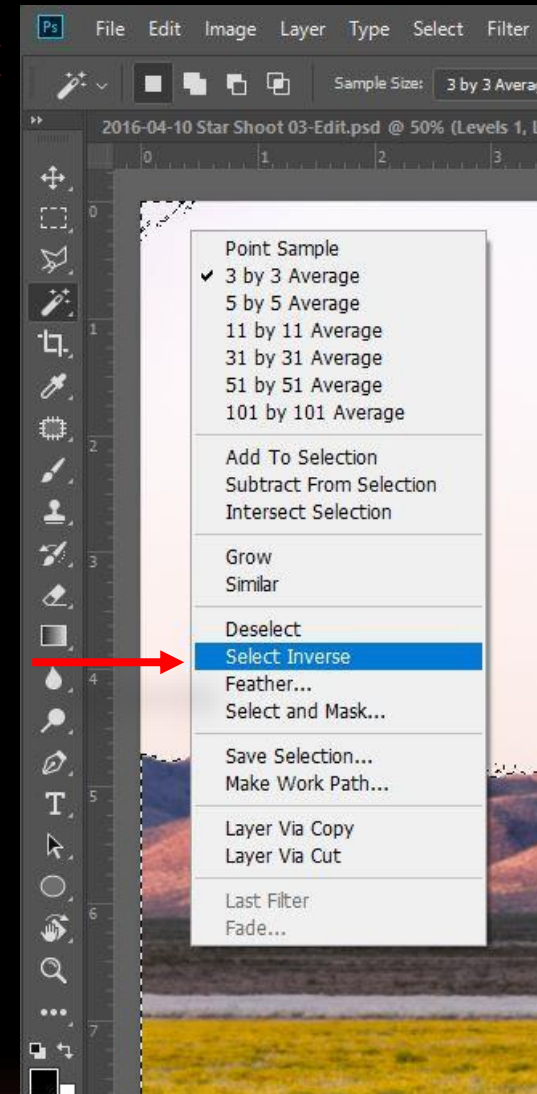
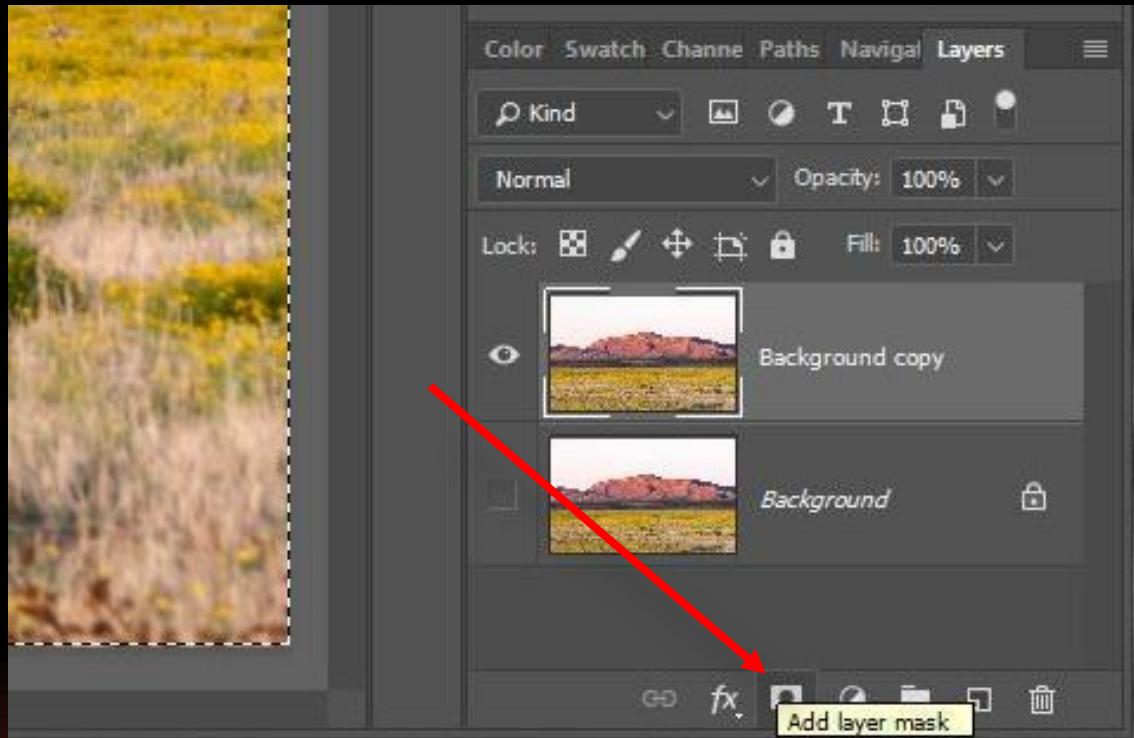
Removing Unwanted Selections

- Pick the Rectangular Marquee Tool, hold down on left mouse button and the Alt key then box what you want to unselect.
- Releasing the mouse button will unselect area.



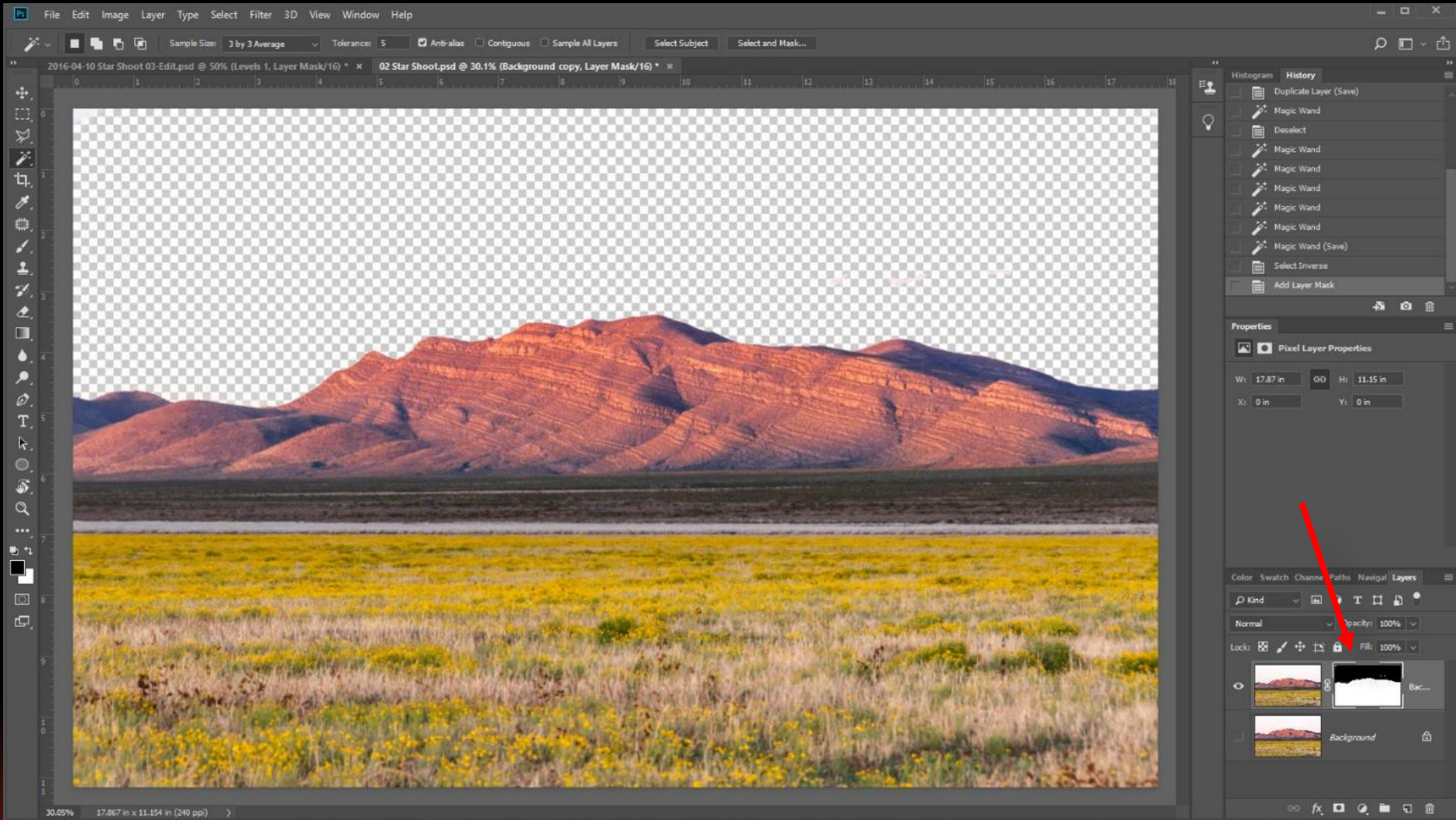
Making Layer Mask

- When done with making selection right Click in selected area then Click on Select Inverse.
- Click on Add Layer Mask icon. That will create a mask based on your selection.



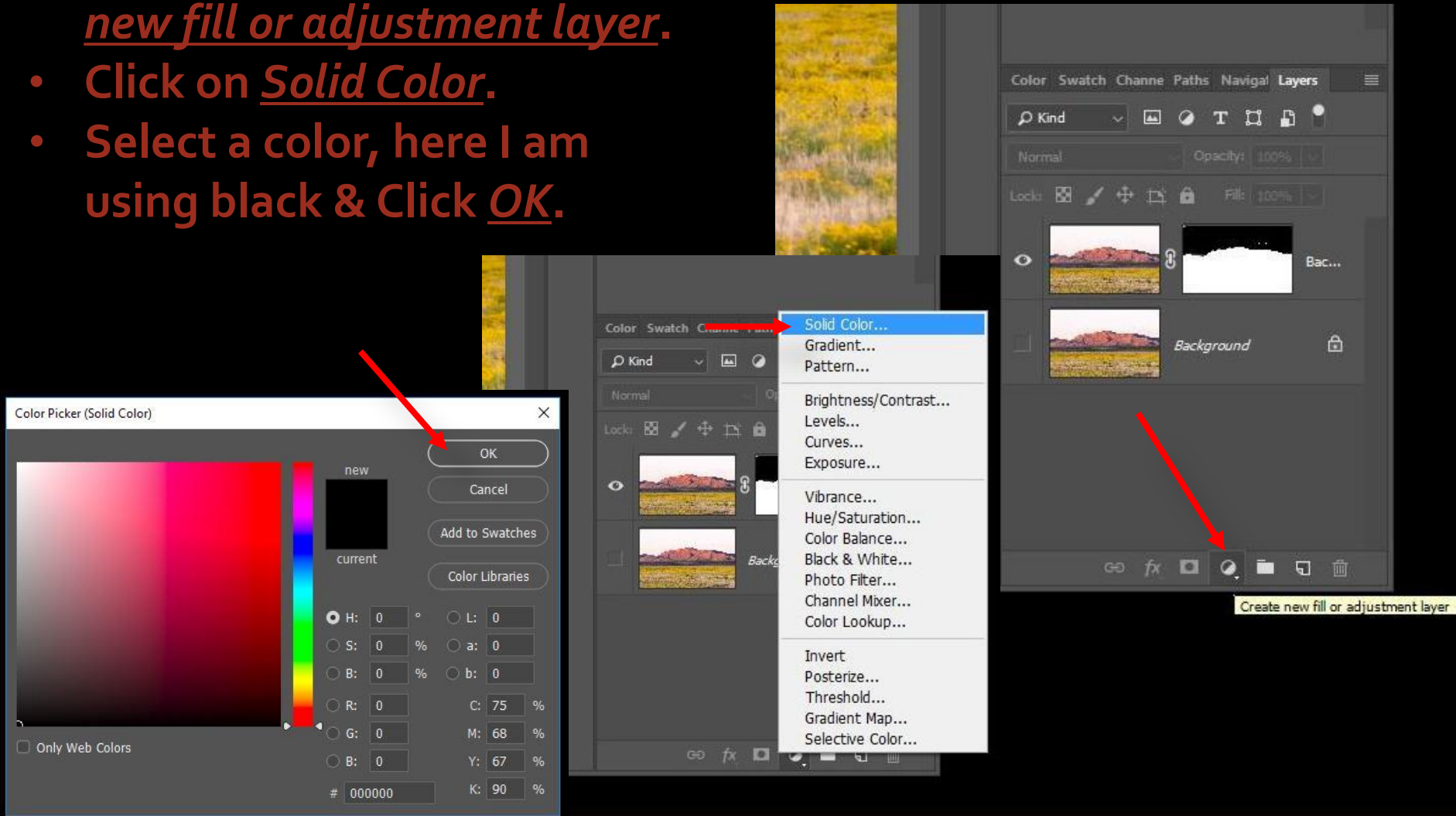
Making Layer Mask

- After clicking the Add Layer Mask icon here is what you get.
- The checkered area is empty or so it looks.



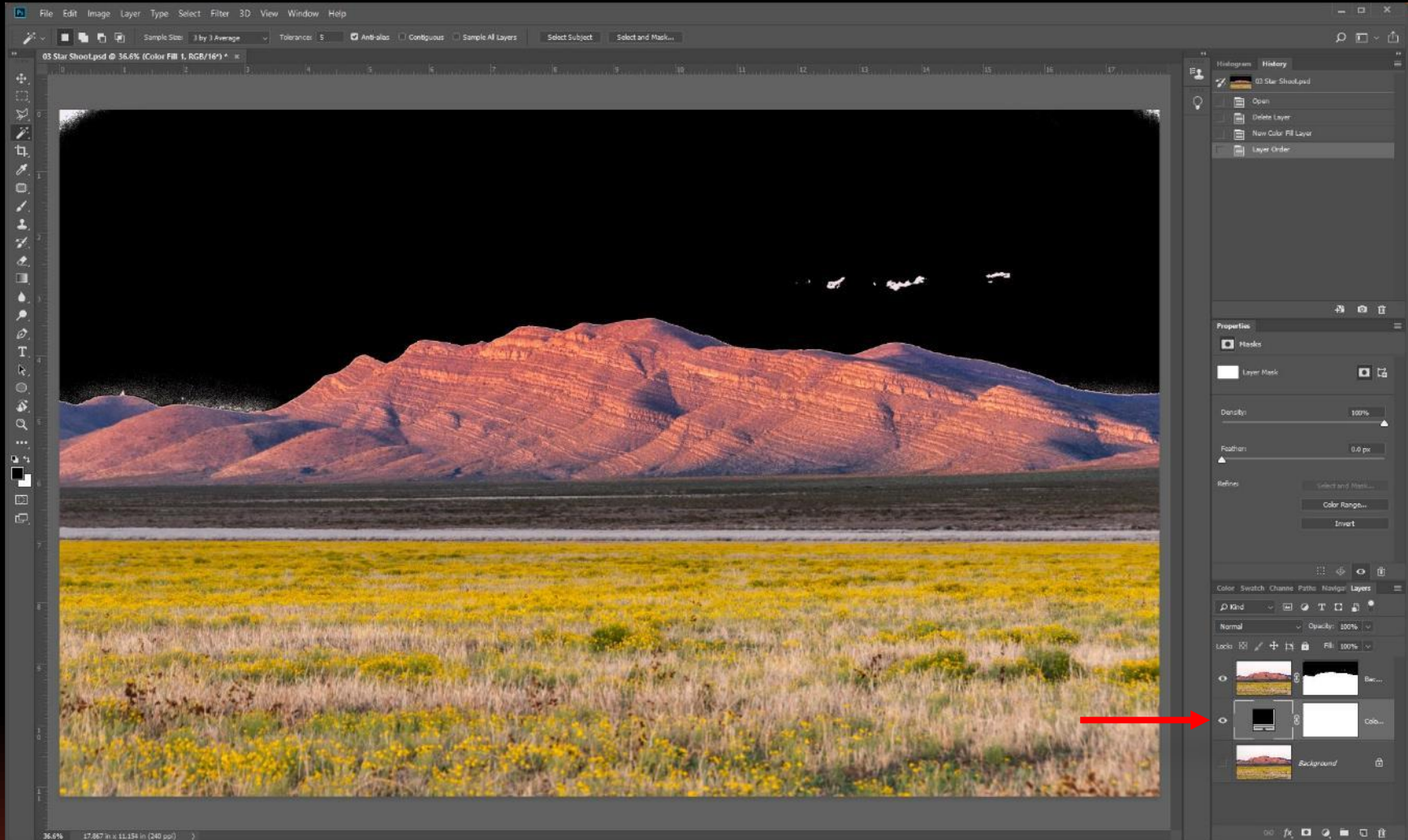
Adding Reveal Layer

- To help see what the empty area looks like first select Create a new fill or adjustment layer.
- Click on Solid Color.
- Select a color, here I am using black & Click OK.



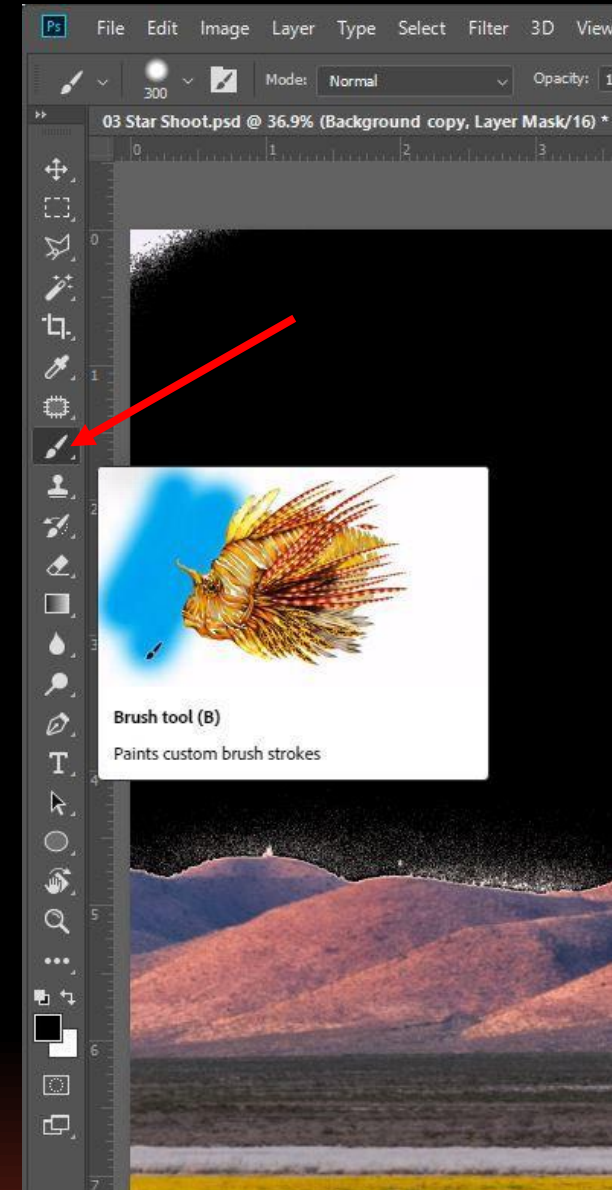
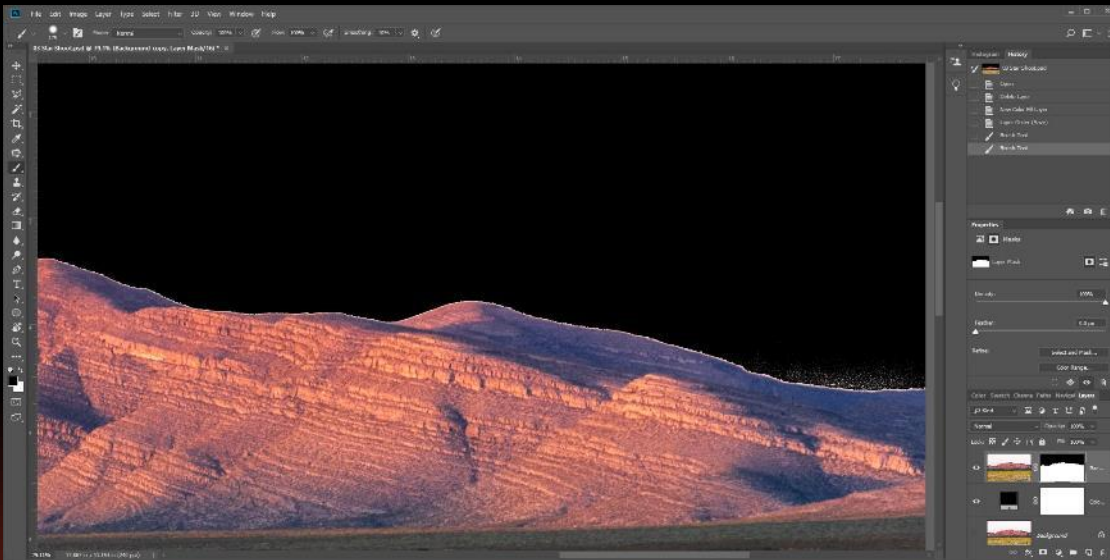
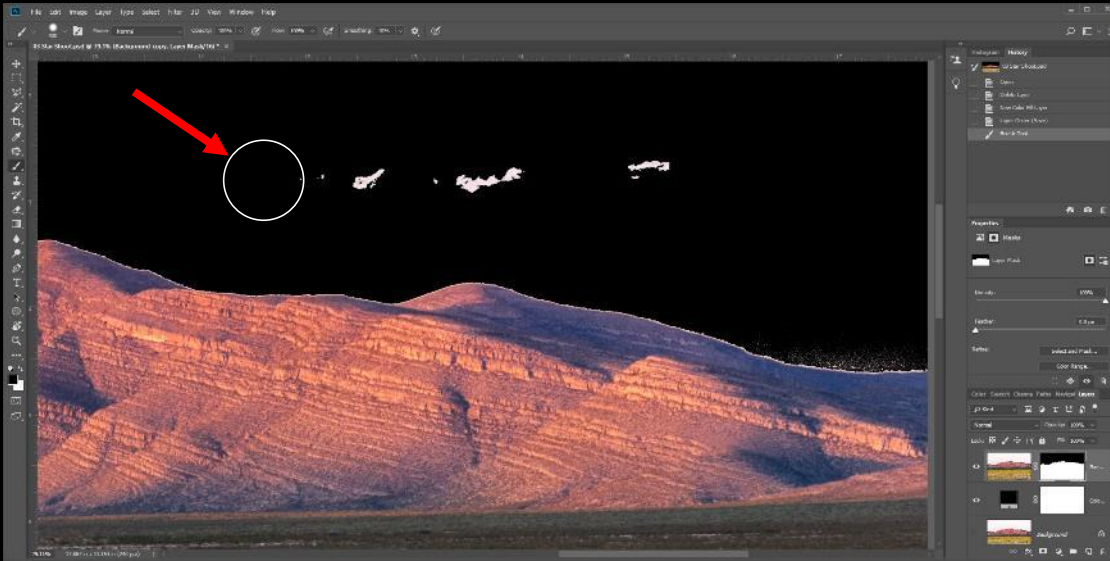
Adding Reveal Layer

- To use, drag the black layer below the working main layer.
- It provides a high contrast between the light original sky so you can see areas missed during the selection process.



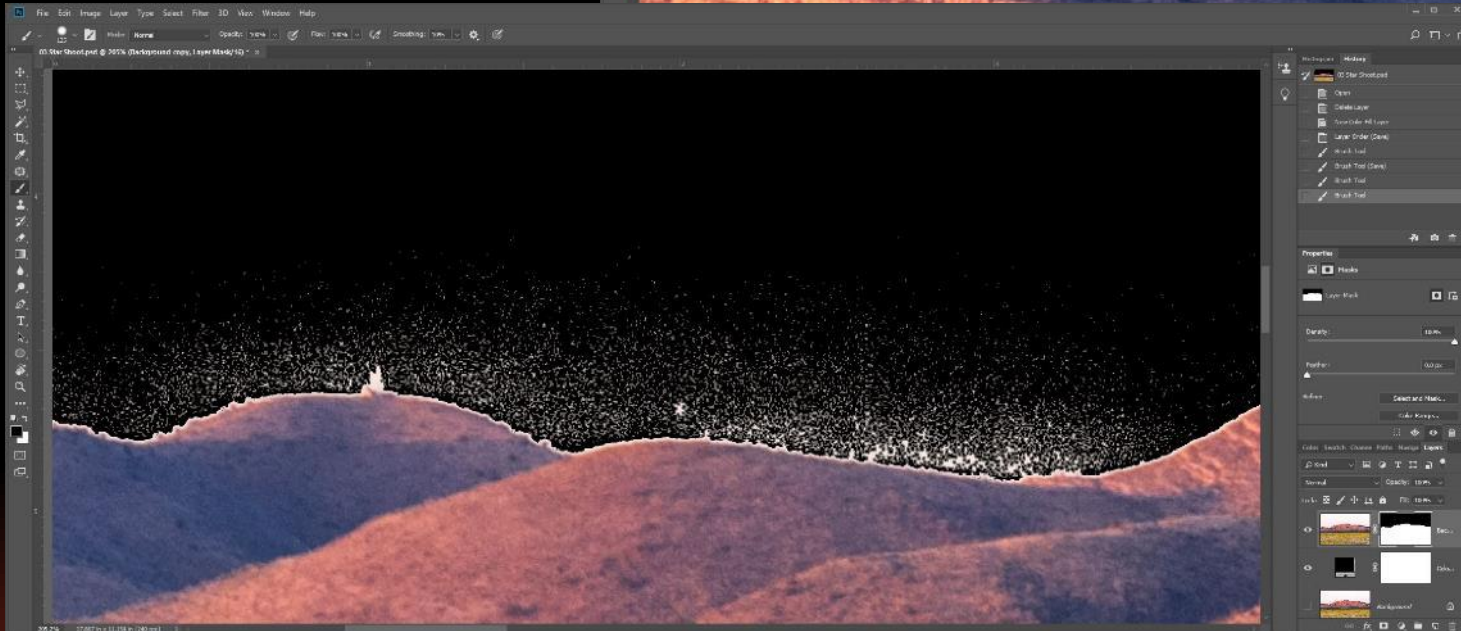
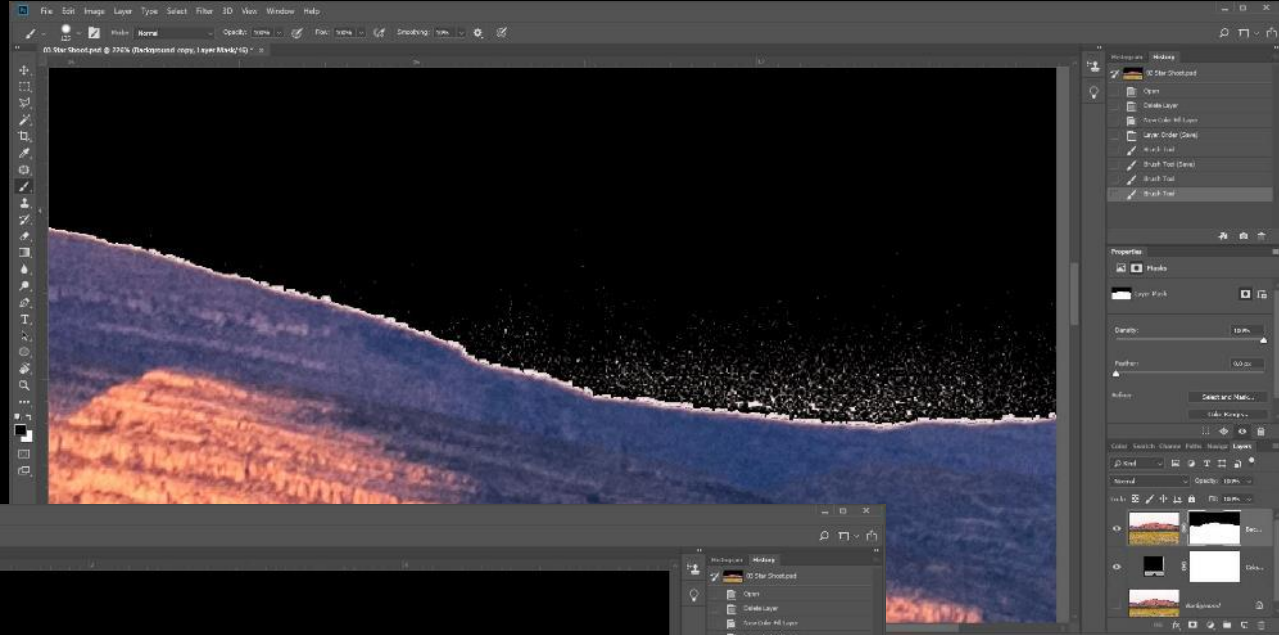
Using the Reveal Layer

- To hide the large areas missed select the Brush, black color.
- Paint over the areas you want to hide.



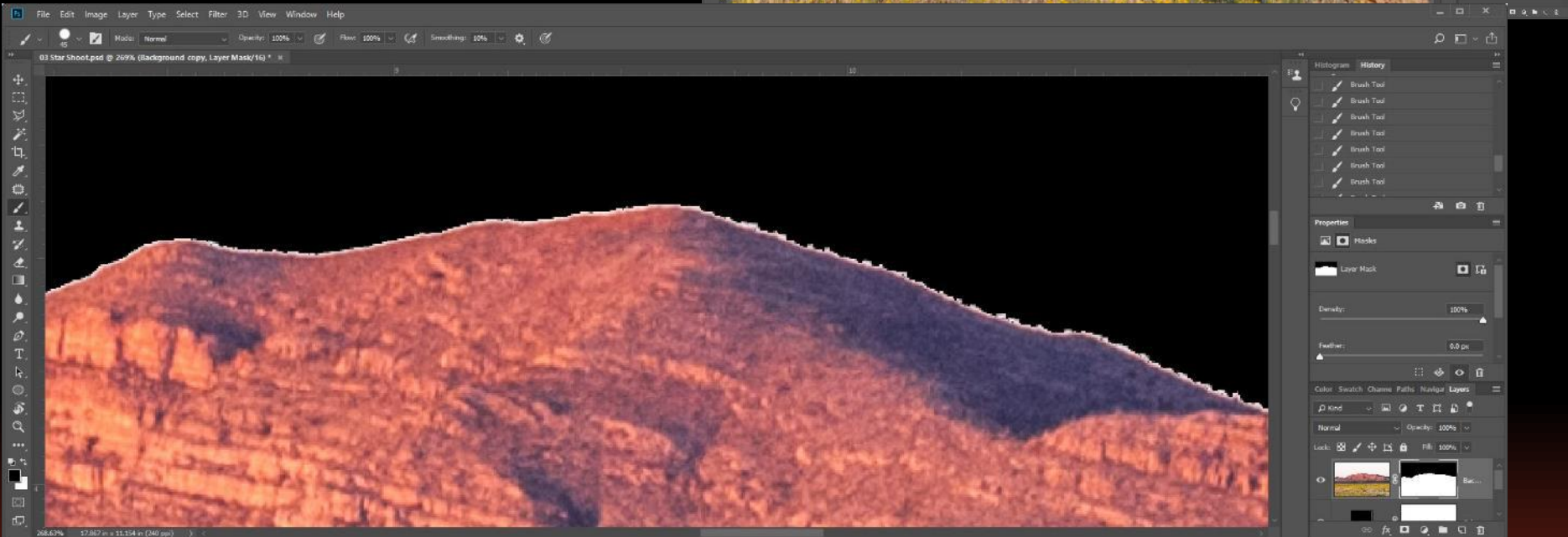
More Detailed Cleanup

- Use the Alt key and the mouse wheel to get in close to clearly see and hide other random pixels. You don't have to get 100%.
- If you hide too much you can unhide by changing the brush color to white.



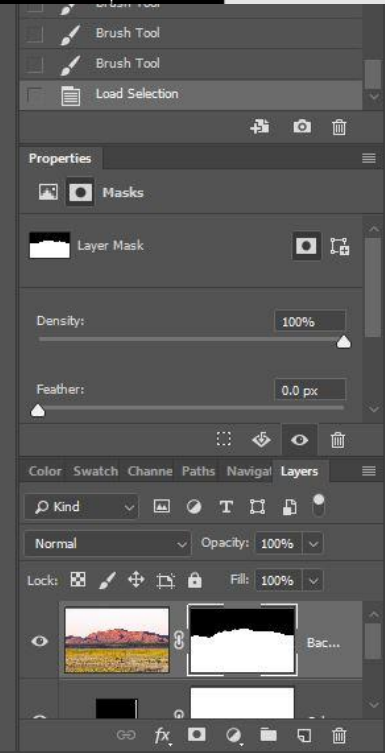
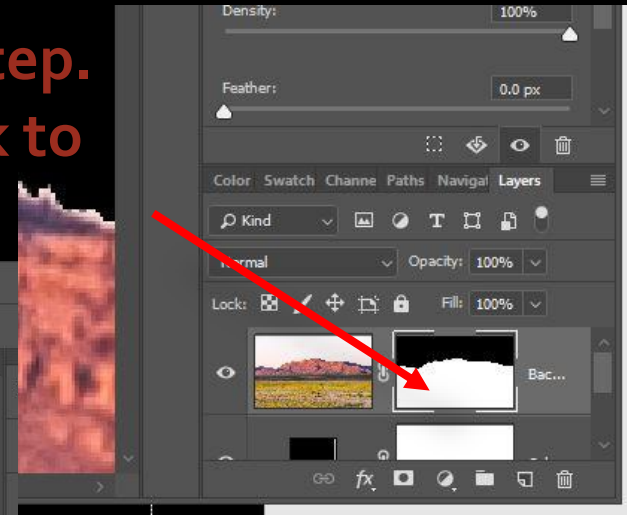
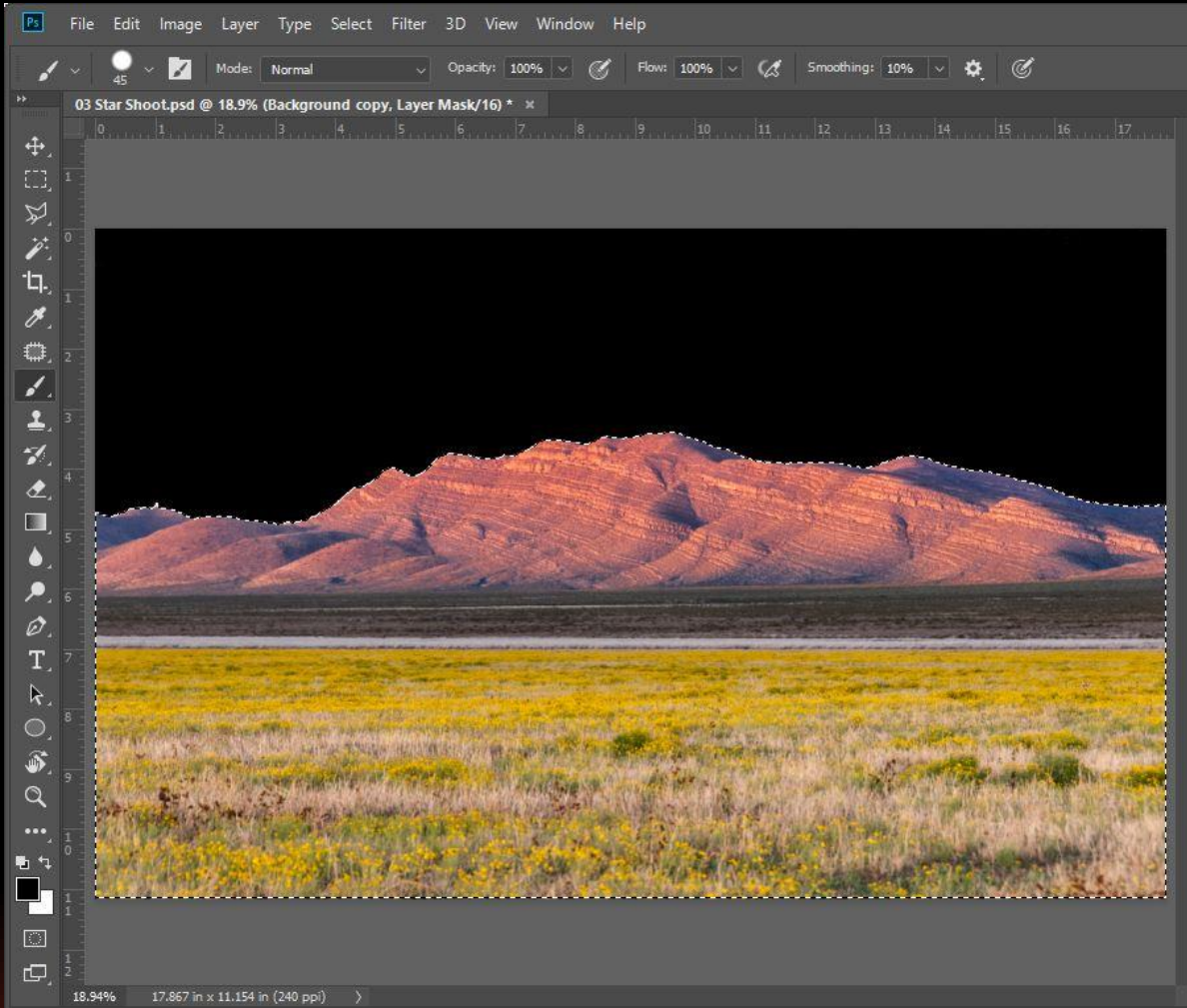
More Detailed Cleanup

- With most of the cleanup done it looks good until you zoom in.
- Zoomed in you can see a "Halo" between the land and the sky.
- Left alone it will scream, "Photoshopped Image"!



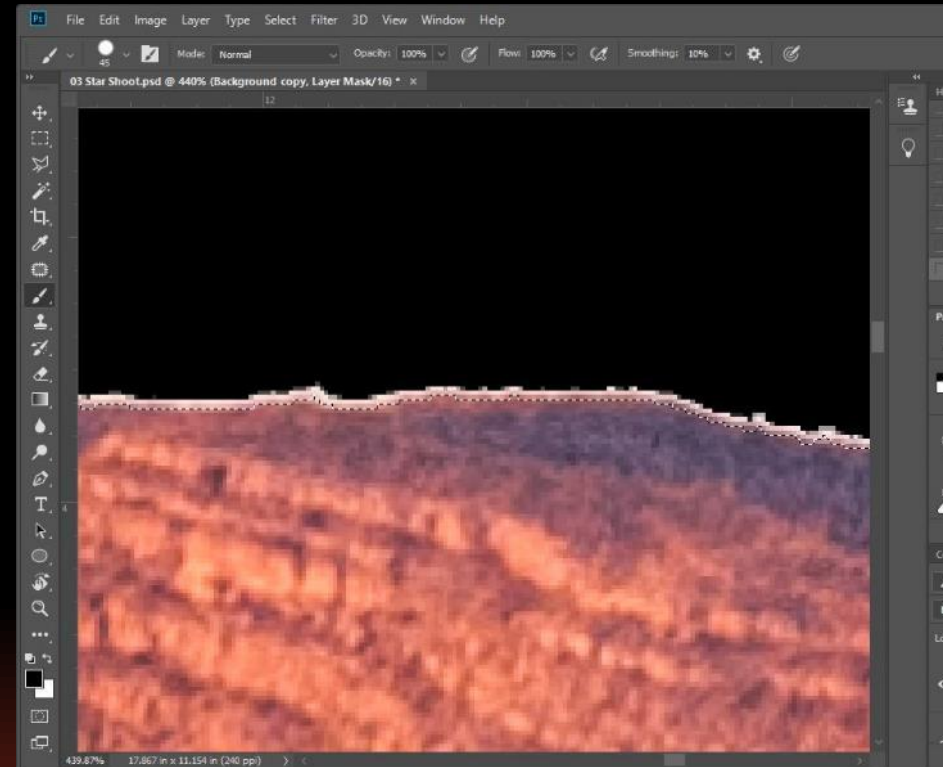
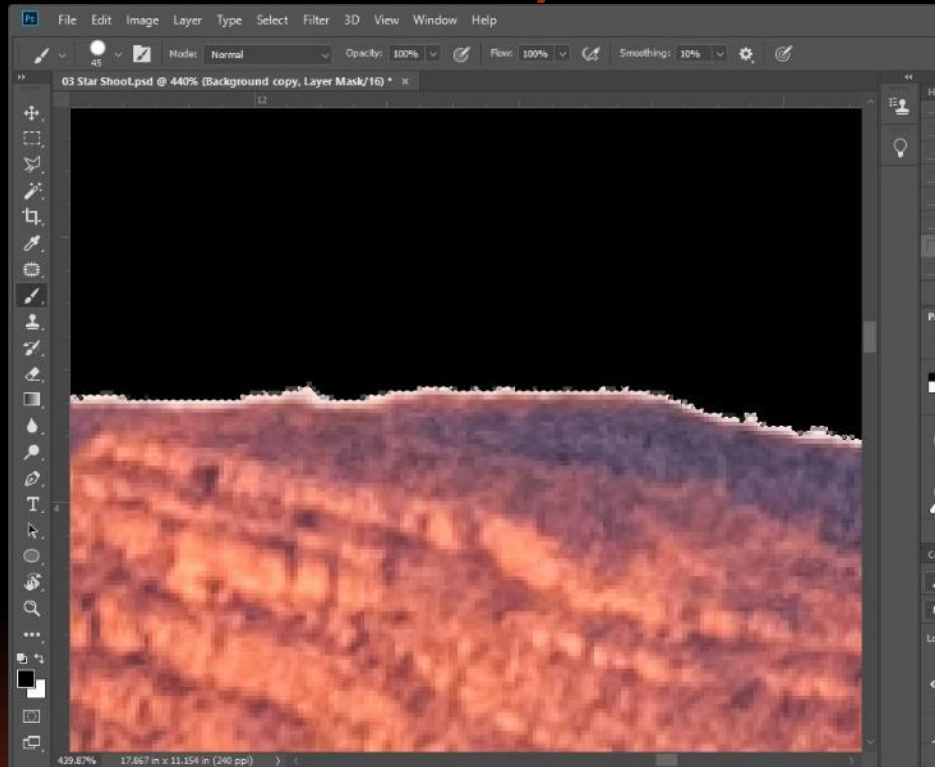
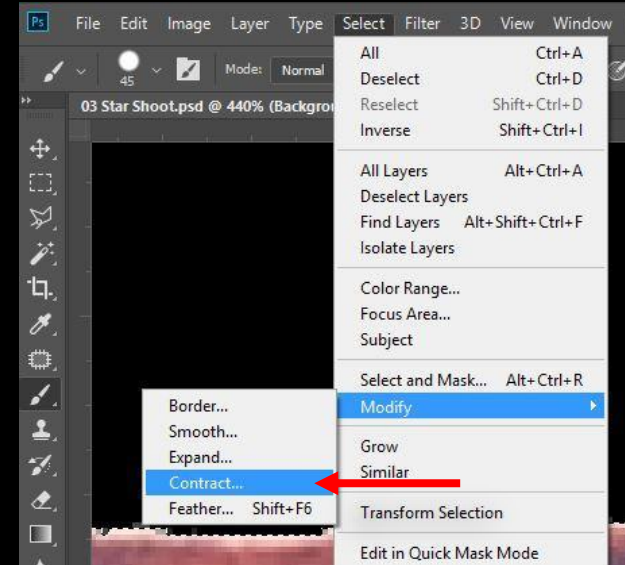
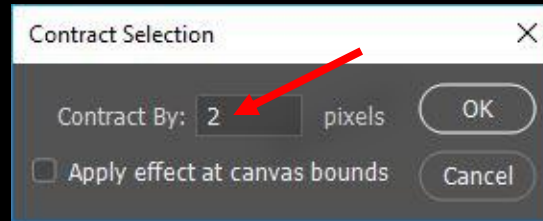
Removing Halo

- Most of the Halo can be removed in one step.
- Place cursor on mask, hold Ctrl key & Click to select the land.



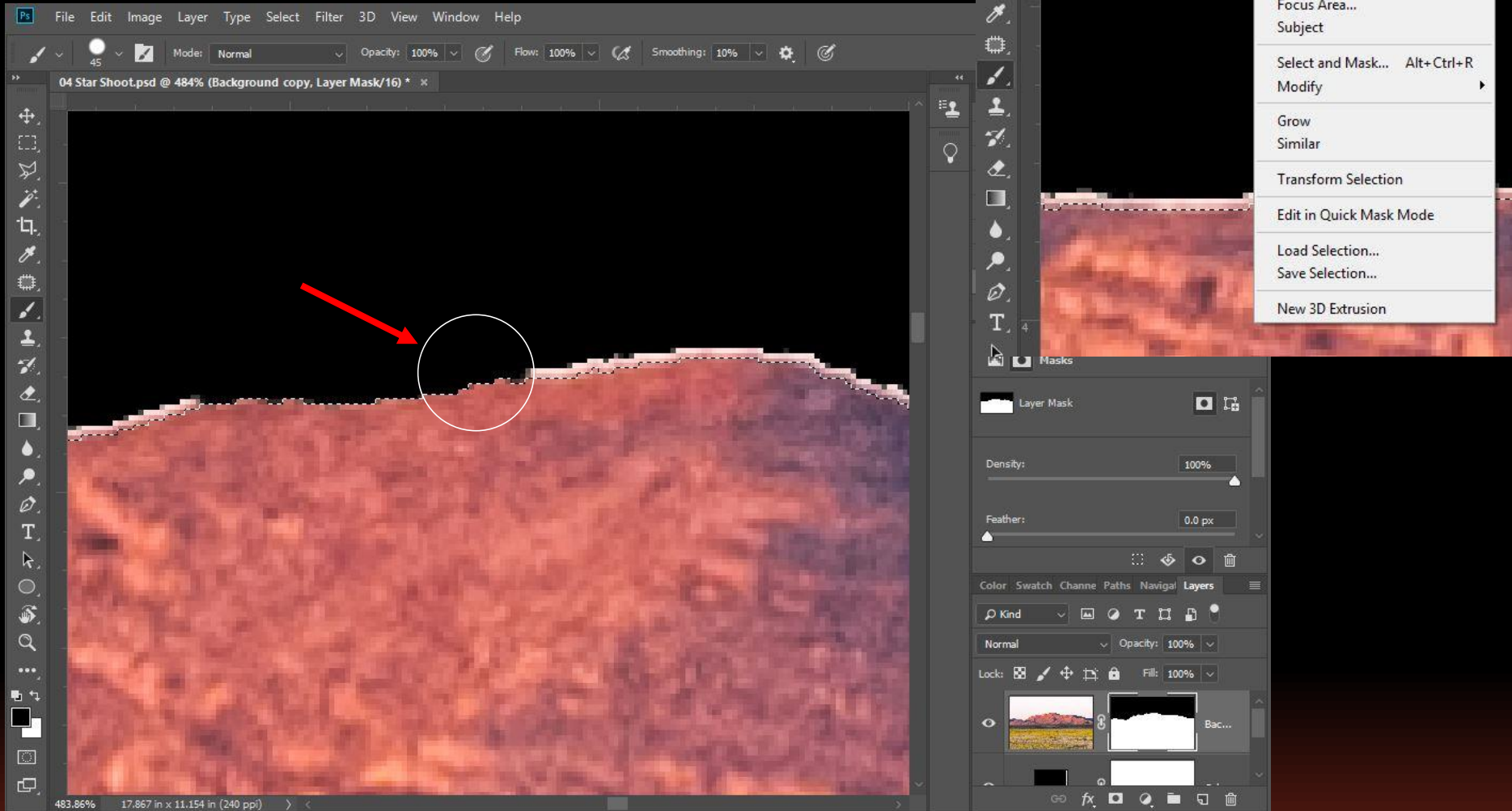
Removing Halo

- With the land selected click on Select > Modify > Contract.
- In the box that comes up type in 2 and Click OK.
- That shrinks the selection by 2 pixels. Results can vary.



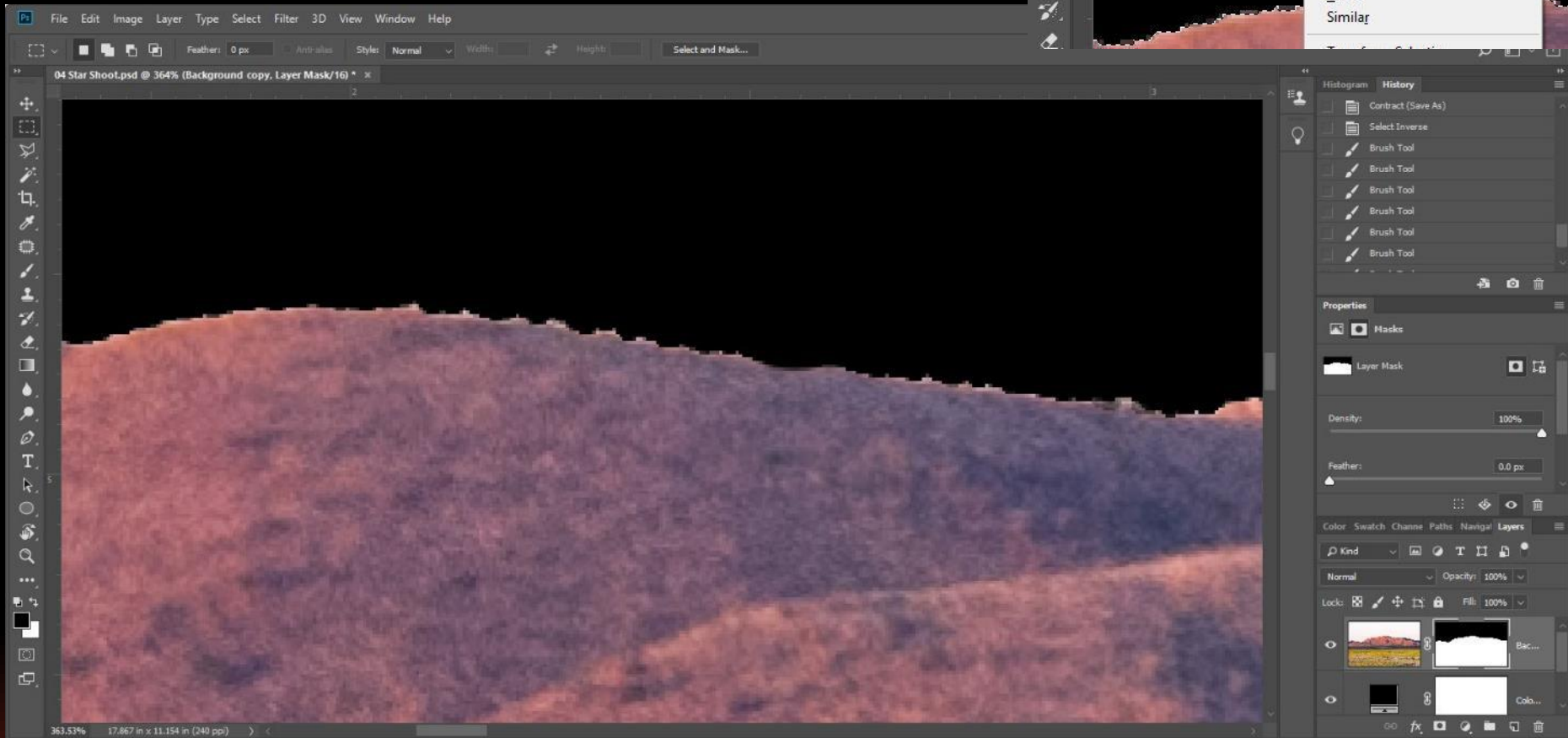
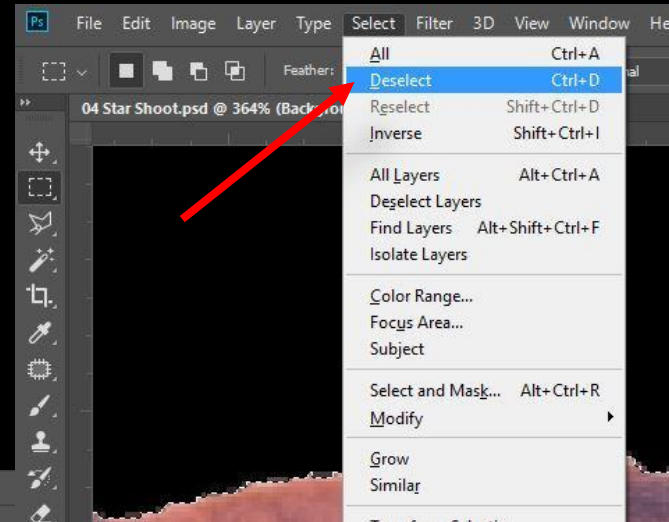
Removing Halo

- To get rid of the Halo Click on Select then Inverse.
- Select the Brush as before and paint the Halo out with black.



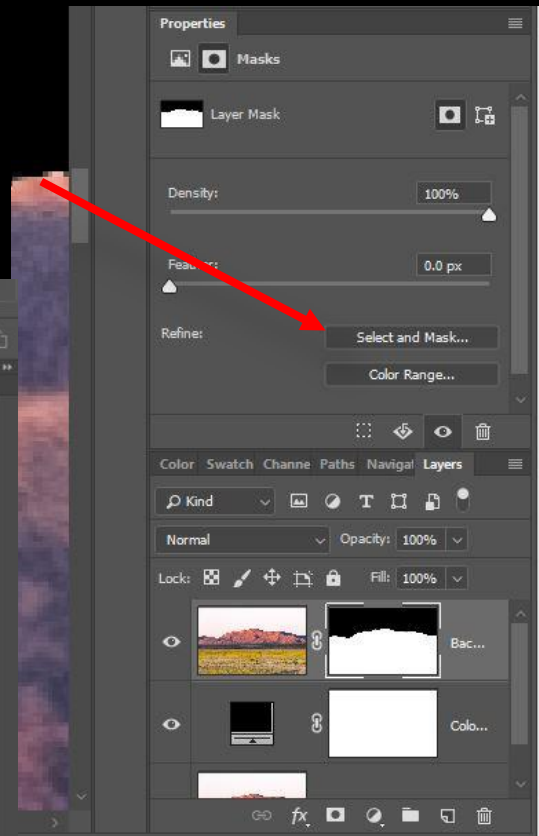
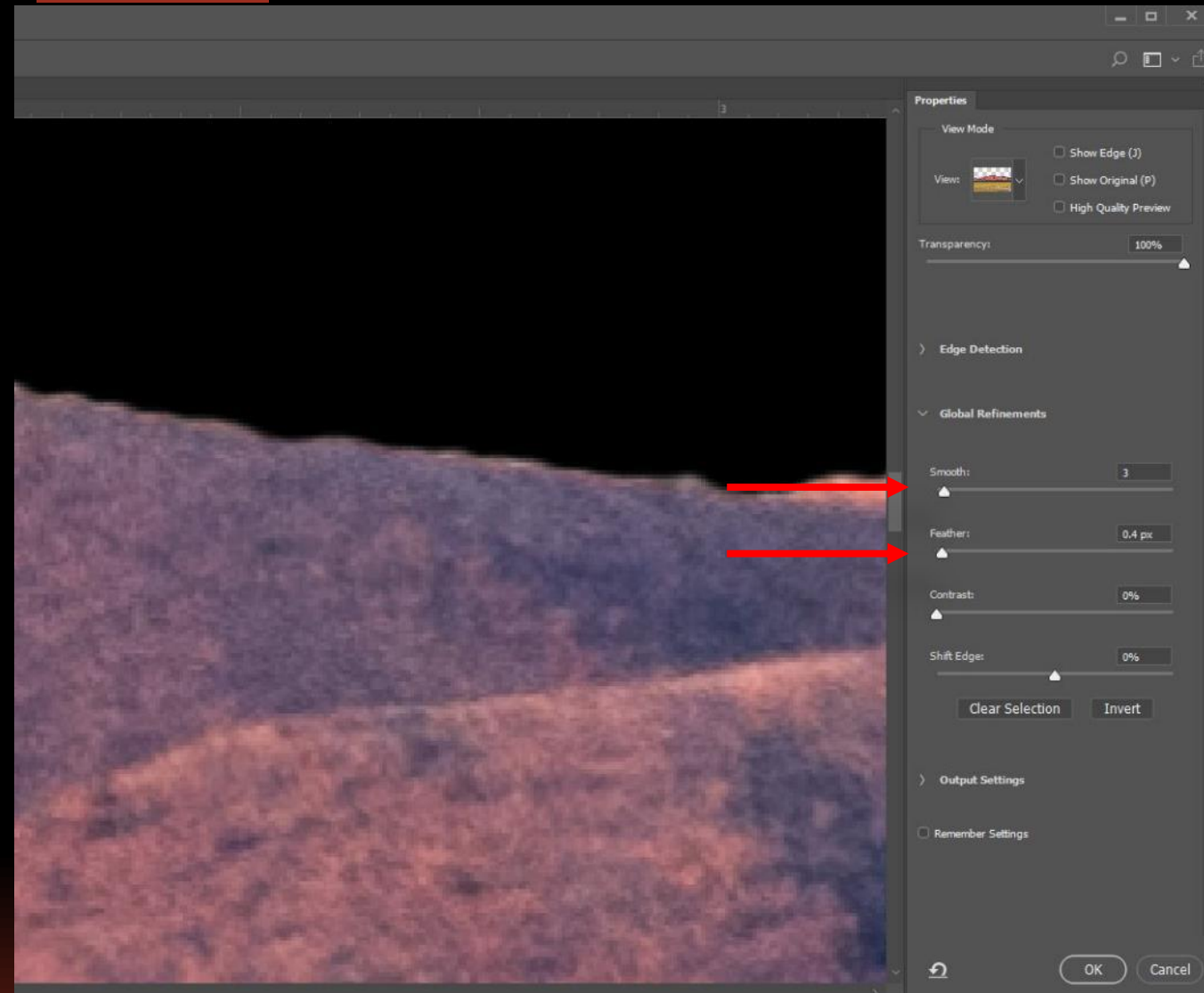
Jagged Edges

- This gets rid of most of the Halo but leaves a jagged edge and some places that still need help.
- To fix first Click Select then Deselect.



Smoothing Jagged Edges

To smooth out the jagged edges Click on Select and Mask.



In the box that comes up set Smooth at 3 and Feather at 0.4 px. Different images need different values.

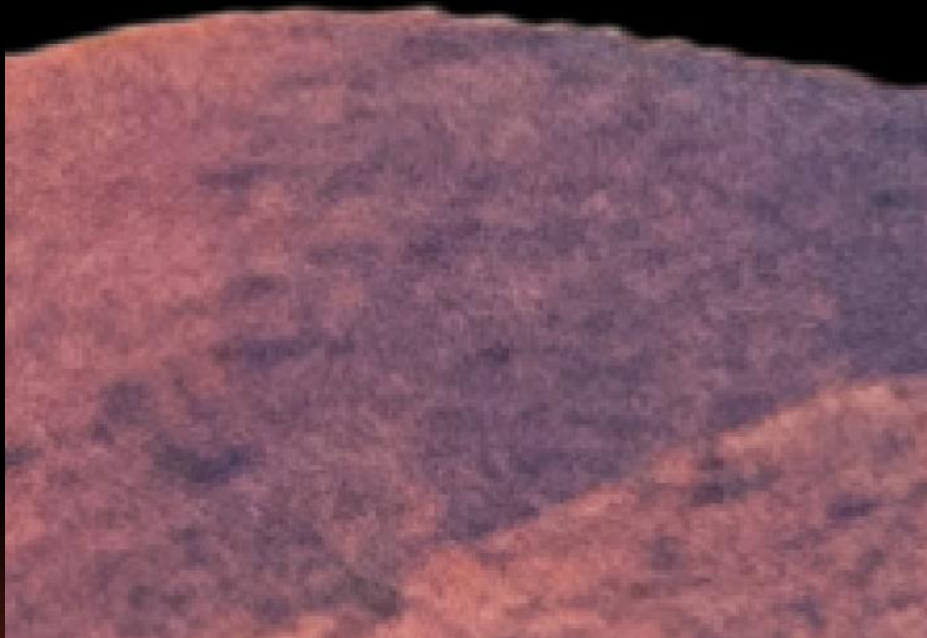
Smoothing Jagged Edges

- **How much to Smooth and Feather? Use an unchanged image.**
- **Zoomed way in shows a natural edge. That provides a guide you can use for reference.**



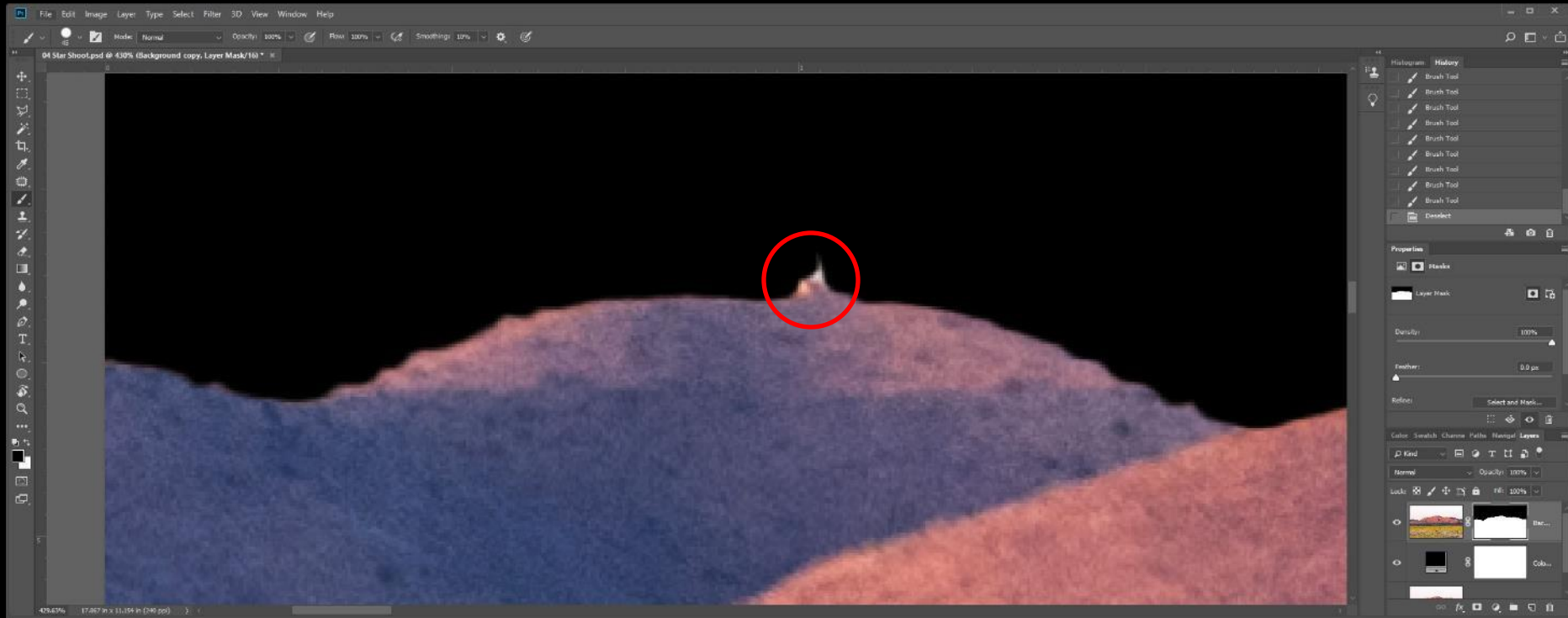
Smoothing Jagged Edges

- Side by side you can see the transition has a similar amount of blur and feathering on the edge.
- Cameras with different resolution will show up differently at the same percentage enlargement.



Almost Final Cleanup

- Now its time for manual evaluation and adjustment.
- Follow the land/sky edge checking for outliers like this one that needs some manual adjusting via the Brush.



Selecting a New Sky

A new sky is one that looks right. Time of day, color, direction of sun etc. Here are two possibilities. Some editing of color balance and overall exposure may need to be done.



Selecting a New Sky

This image was my first selection. However, there was not enough contrast between the hills and the sky.



I like this one better as the hills do not get lost in the sky.

Editing a New Sky

In some images the blue sky is slightly lighter as you get closer to land. A touch lighter in that area can add to the realism.



This was a hard image to add a new sky to. What looks like a little bit of Halo is really snow on the trees.





Questions?

