



BLACK ROCK DESERT  
HIGH ROCK CANYON  
EMIGRANT TRAILS



NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

# Emigrants Thoughts

- Fly Canyon was the next major stop after Mud Meadows on the Applegate-Lassen Trail through the NCA.
- This stretch of the trail was the most difficult and dangerous until the descent to Goose Lake in northeastern California.
- The trail turned into a rocky 45 degree angle slope that stretched about 200 feet.
- Before an alternate route was blazed around the canyon, emigrants had to find ways of getting their wagons to the bottom of the canyon.
- Some lowered their wagons with ropes, or locked their wheels with chains or poles while others added an extra team of oxen to slow the momentum of the careening wagons.
- Although most teams were successful, diarists tell of wagons toppling end over end and crashing to smithereens at the base of the slide.

"The road terminated, as it were, at the edge of the very apex of this hill, and from a big rock on the left of trail, at crest, I looked down, and for a while thought it must be "the jumping-off place"! Here, down this very steep descent, must our wagons roll!... Well, it was only about 200 yards, very deep sand, and loose stones. We double locked the wheels, and teamsters and assistants carefully lead the mules, and one after the other, slowly, and successfully, was the entire train taken down on the plateau below. On looking back; it seemed amazing that wagons and teams could descent in safety... The declivity, and its base, retained vestages of unfortunate traveling, in the shape of broken wagons, wheels, hubs, tires, axles, &c and 3 dead oxen."

~J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1849

- Some rocks on the trail scraped iron off wagon wheels as they were skidding down a rock shelf. Over time, the iron deposited on these rock surfaces oxidized and left distinctive rust marks. These rust marks show the route wagons took going down the shelf.

