

Euromountains.net Project – theme 3
INTERREG III C



**Defence and Management of the Fragile Rural Areas,
Landscapes and Natural Resources in Mountains**

Case study: “Skarverennet”, Buskerud County, Norway

*- Norway’s biggest ski race, a challenging balancing act between
commerce and environment*

Date: 01.11.2006 (Final document)



Project part financed by the European Union

Case study: “Skarverennet”, Buskerud County, Norway

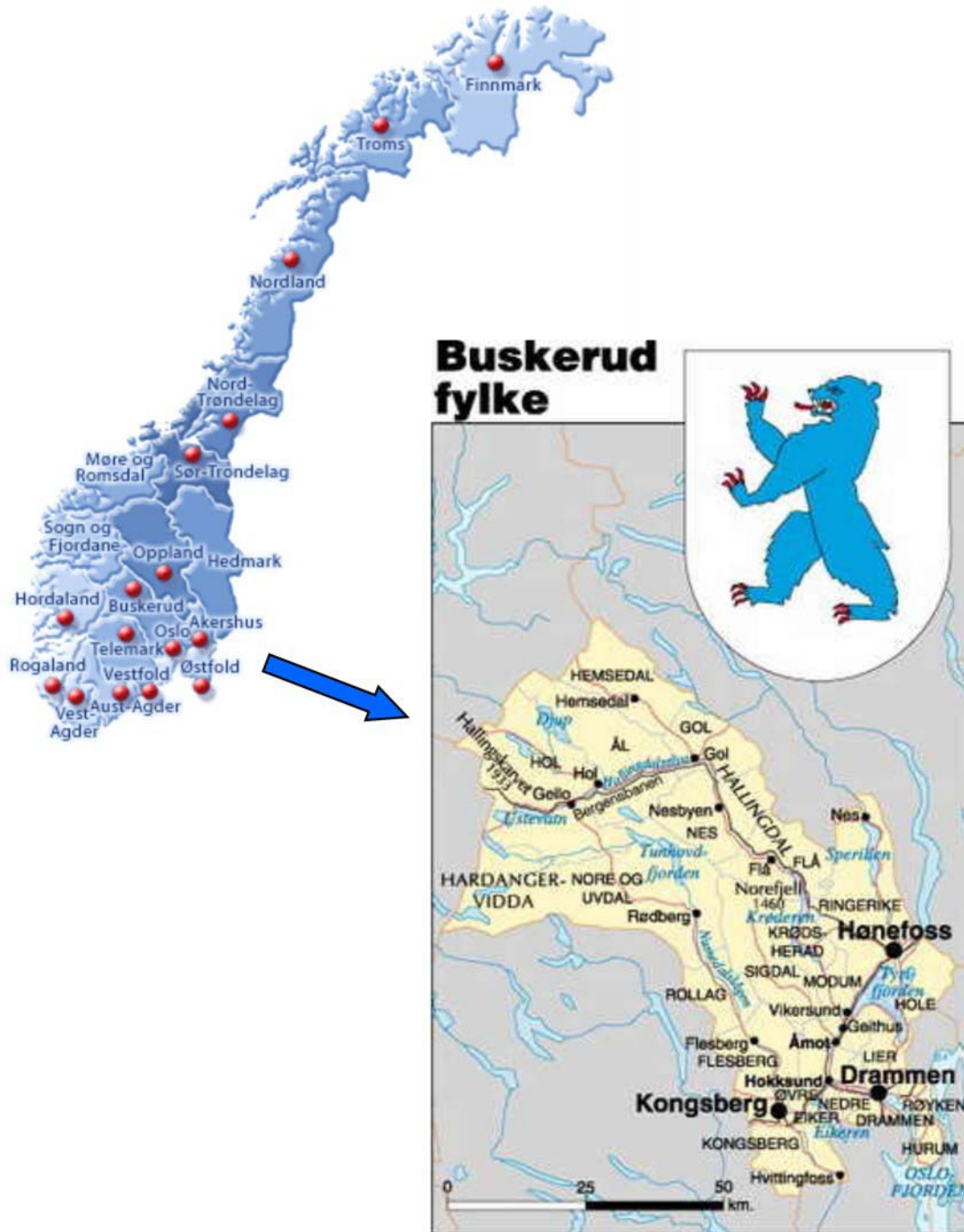
- Norway’s biggest ski race, a challenging balancing act between commerce and environment

Contents

	Page
1 Area description form	3
Location map	3
1.1 Geographical environment	5
1.2 Socio-economic dynamics	5
1.3 Specific features of the area in terms of landscape and natural resource	6
1.4 Policy organisation and zoning	6
2 Resource description form	7
2.1 Description of the resource	7
2.2 Connections of the resource with the local territory	7
3 Project description form	8
3.1 The project	8
4 Policy background and public intervention	11
4.1 Policy framework that affect the project	11
5 Cooperation and Partnership Public/ Private	12
5.1 Cooperation and the delivery agents	12
6 Evaluation of local results of activity	13
6.1 Effectiveness of the project	13

1 – Area description form

Location map



In air, Oslo-Bergen, Mar 31 2004, Petter Bjørstad
Western part of the Hallingskarvet massif



Western part of the Hallingskarvet massif – Petter Bjørstad

1.1 Geographical environment

Name of area

Hallingskarvet, Finse – Ustaoset, Hol kommune, Buskerud fylke.
The starting area at Finse is in Ulvik kommune, Hordaland

Meters above sea level (max/min)

Track: 1000 – 1450 metres above sea level

Area: 1000 – 1933 metres above sea level

Landscape:

Varied landscape with moors, mountains and valleys. The mountain range Hallingskarvet (1800-1933 metres above sea level) runs from east to west and has impressive views throughout the whole length of the track. Most of the area is bare rock, but with some mountain birch forestation below 1100 metres above sea level.

Climate:

The area is situated on the divide between the East and the West country, which means a varying climate with shifting weather and a great deal of rain/snow. Large parts of the area have a polar climate, which is to say that the warmest month has an average temperature below 10 degrees Celsius.

1.2 Socio-economic dynamics

Population 01.01.06

						% Change	% totally without work	number/km2
	total	men	women	0 -15	67 -	91 -	unemployed	Population density
Telemark	166140	81842	84298	32625	23775	2,01 %	3,6	11,99
Vinje	3694	1851	1843	758	552	-6,69 %	2,2	1,35
Tinn	6247	3004	3243	1159	1124	-8,98 %	3	3,37
Buskerud	245225	121007	124218	49637	32605	8,86 %	3	17,77
Hol	4500	2227	2273	870	695	-4,46 %	1,5	2,71

Employees distributed on industries pr. 31.12.2004

	Buskerud	Ål	Hol	Nore og Uvdal
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3013	250	87	121
Raw oil and natural gas, exploitation and pipe transport	1	0	0	0
Industry and mining	16583	199	138	94
Power- and water supply	759	37	64	49
Building and construction work	9188	393	265	168
Retail, hotels and restaurants	22323	317	690	184
Transport and communication	5922	143	82	32
Financial and business services	11076	96	105	64
Public administration and other services	40952	964	758	455
Miscellaneous	93	3	0	1
Sum	109910	2 402	2 189	1 168

Source: PANDA

General overview of business and business development in the area

Hol kommune has maintained its traditional mountain agriculture of livestock/hunting/fishing. However, in addition, within the last 100 years (after the opening of the Bergen railway in 1909) it has also developed a large tourist business. Hol today, is one of Norway's largest tourist kommunes. With the exception of the big four town & city based kommunes in the country. In addition, it retains a traditional industry based on exploitation of iron and production of different tools. Though stable, this industry has not increased its work place development in the last 25 years. Recently, Hol kommune (with Geilo as its main area) has had considerable activity in the construction of private cabins and apartments. This has led to good times for workmen of all kinds.

Business activities that influence the natural resources in the area

Traditional mountain agriculture is the mountain's most important resource. The hunting and fishing are to a large degree utilised as before, while the grazing resources are utilised less and less. In some areas this leads to changes of the landscape in the shape of overgrowth and a change in the components of the vegetation. This is largely perceived as a lessening of the resources.

Most types of tourism affect the natural resources in one-way or another. Modern tourism demands organisation of the infrastructure like the marking of tracks, preparation of tracks, bicycle paths and bicycle tracks etc. This will often lead to the encroachment of nature. There are divided opinions when it comes to the effects of more organisation. Does more organisation lead to more people seeking vulnerable areas, and thereby increasing the chances of negative consequences? Or perhaps organisation can lead to a channelling of traffic to defined areas and thereby limit the negative effects?

In any event, it can be stated that the development in tourism and the construction of cabins (more cabins with higher standards) leads to more people in the areas. The development of new areas designated to the construction of cabins leads to a strain on the area resources.

1.3 Specific features of the area in terms of landscape and natural resources

Particular main features for the landscape and the natural resources

Use of area	Total km2	Above 600 masl %	Sheltered area km2	Sheltered area %
Telemark	13854	56		
Vinje	2731	97	842	27
Tinn	1853	88	337	16
Buskerud	13796	60		
Hol	1663	99	597	32

local challenges (area usage, climate changes, overgrowth, mass tourism...)

Large increase in the construction of cabins/holiday housing leads to increased utilisation/exploitation of the area to be developed. The demand for the organisation of activities in connection with this development also leads to increased use of area, especially in outlying fields (tracks etc.).

The combination of a warmer climate and less grazing animals in outlying fields/mountains, leads to a continuous upward move of the forest line. This is especially valid for the deciduous forest. This development contributes to a change of the character of the landscape and that parts of the terrain are less accessible. Special actions towards this development have been put in place but are still not widely implemented.

Hol kommune is among the largest travel/tourism kommunes in the country. Hol is also among the kommunes in the country with the biggest number of cabins. This leads to a population increase in the high seasons (winter holiday/Easter) which is more than tenfold. Such numbers will lead to generally increased traffic, also in the outlying fields, especially with organised offerings like prepared tracks, but also outside of such offers. In as much as these traffic high points are in the winter, this has led to limited 'wear' on nature.

1.4 Policy organisation and zoning

NUTS-distribution

2 – Resource description form

2.1 Description of the resource

The most important motives for the establishment of Hallingskarvet National Park are:

- to take care of a large, continuous mountain area with few encroachments
- to secure it's large geological and landscape qualities
- to take care of it's biological value (flora and fauna)
- to secure valuable watercourses and protect against further power development
- to take care of valuable cultural landscapes and environments

Special conditions that also are of merit include the goals of securing larger continuous population and grazing conditions for the wild reindeer tribes. Here Hallingskarvet is seen in connection with other bordering protected areas as Hardangervidda.

The other resources in the mountain area that are utilised are, grazing for livestock, hunting and fishing. The area has in the last 100 years been more and more used for out door living, free time tourism and in the latter years also as activity area for the travel businesses.

2.2 Connections of the resource with the local territory

Landowner overview (% distribution private/public)

- Hallingskarvet National Park consists of approx 50% privately owned and 50% publicly owned land.
- The tracks of Skarverennet run for about 70% in the National Park but are also on 100% privately owned land (sameige land) in some parts.

3 - Project description form

3.1 The project

Facts, purpose and reasoning behind the choice

The Skarverennet ski race is organised by 'Geilo IL', a local sports organisation with the idealistic goals of promoting healthy sporting activities.

The ski race 'Skarverennet' is 39km and goes from Finse (1200 metres above sea level) to Ustaoset (100 metres above sea level). It was organised for the first time in 1974 with 1200 participants. The record turnout is 14 500 participants.

Facts regarding Skarverennet 2006:

- 11800 participants, of these 5700 were women
- 1100 track sticks marked the track
- 4 preparation vehicles spent 160 hours preparing the tracks
- 10 trains with 1200-1400 passengers took the participants to Finse (no car route)
- 100 snowmobiles were available for service and security
- 2 helicopters were at a standby state of readiness throughout
- 3 food and drink stations were established with 20-30 people in attendance
- 16 000 liters of warm water were brought to the trackside
- 100 000 drinking cups were used (recyclable paper)
- 1 050 volunteers were active during the year beforehand. (Sports organisations, Red Cross, other volunteer organisations)

Skarverennet has developed into one of the biggest sporting events in Norway, both when it comes to the number of participants and turnover. That all this takes place in a vulnerable area that was made into a national park in 2006 makes this an arena for potential conflict. This makes Skarverennet an interesting field of study when trying to find good ideas and good solutions for business development in protected areas.

Skarverennet is organised as a sub-use under Geilo IL. Geilo IL has 3 full time employees where more than two work years are dedicated to skarverennet.

The organisation has a turnover of 15-20 mill NOK with a yearly surplus of approximately 2-2,5 million NOK. The income is divided between entrance fee (participants), sponsors/sale of adverts and other sources of income. In addition it has established the Skarverenn Shop, a large scale, time limited, sports shop, with a turnover of approximately 10million NOK during a 32-hour opening time (more than 300 000 NOK per hour).

The total turnover related to Skarverennet in Hol kommune comes to about 50 million NOK during the period of Thursday to Friday. Most of this is in regards to overnight stays, catering and retail. It is clear that this contributes to a significant source of income for the local community.

The yearly surplus enables Geilo IL to further develop their sports institutions and activities that serve as assets for the local population and that lead to activities, arrangements and training during other parts of the year. In addition these institutions are important for the establishment and conduct of NTG (the Norwegian top athlete's school for upper secondary education), which also is a service asset for the local community.

Historical milestones

- 1974: Skarverennet established
- 1978: The number of participants passes 10 000
- 2003: Agreement with Hol kommune regarding use of specific areas
- 2005: The race is cancelled due to bad weather
- 2006: The Hallingskarvet National Park is established where 70% of the tracks will be in the national park

Difficulties and challenges on the way.

i. A large arrangement based on 99% volunteers

Skarverennet engages nearly 1000 volunteer officials. This means that most of the local community is engaged with big and small tasks before, during and after the race. Most of these are recruited through the sports club or other local organisations. Even if the voluntary contribution is the main source of income for these organisations, it is still a fact that the voluntary work is less of a commodity today than before. It is still a challenge to carry this out at the same time, as this is an insecurity factor that the arrangement will have to live with.

ii. Security in rough mountain terrain

To create an event that takes care of the security of 15 000 participants in rough mountain terrain is a superior goal as well as a huge challenge. It is a permanent system that continuously evaluates whether it is responsible to go through with the event. This system continues its evaluation right up to the early morning of the day of the race, to decide whether it is responsible to go through with it. This evaluation is based on local weather observations and prognoses for the day. But even if these are 99% certain, the conditions can be so shifting that there has to be a security set up all along the track. How big this should be, in terms of people and snowmobiles, is not easy to determine. Even if it is a goal not to have too many motorised vehicles in the area, one will always need a certain over-capacity on this area on stand-by. It is clear that Skarverennet has a functioning set up when it comes to security.

iii. The relations with the landowners in such a big event.

Some of the course runs over private land (mostly private sameige). It is therefore crucial for the event organisers to continue their good rapport with them. In the first years, when the event grew from 1000 to 10 000 participants, one challenge was, among others, littering along the tracks. The landowners mostly felt the negative consequence of this littering, and here Geilo IL needed to find better solutions. After Skarverennet dealt with this problem and introduced an overall environmental profile for the race, good solutions have been found that reduce the littering as much as possible. It is important to inform/motivate both the participants and the organisers. When the event will be carried out in a national park for the first time in 2007, it will be natural to emphasise the environmental profile.

iv. The relationship with the environmental administrative government

Skarverennet has used the same area for the track/course all these years. The nature qualities have not changed in these 30 years. Up until a few years ago, Skarverennet communicated with local organisations when it came to environmental questions. These have largely been issues like motor traffic in outlying areas and the relationship to the wild reindeer. This contact has mostly been constructive and practically oriented. There have been registered incidents where the law has been broken; something the event organiser has taken in hand. But there has been mostly positive and constructive dialog between Geilo IL and the local administrative government. When the process in establishing the Hallingskarvet National Park formally started in 2002, this good cooperation with the local administrative government enabled a central position for the Skarverennet in the protection process early on in the process. Skarverennet was therefore early on, one of those activities that was positively mentioned as an exception from the general prohibition against activities in the suggested protection regulations. Skarverennet has therefore, through long and professional dialogue with the protection administration government, achieved an approved status in relation to its future existence in the national park.

v. Lack of capital?

The development of Skarverennet has not been hindered by the lack of capital. All the arrangements, part from the first, have given good financial profit. Skarverennet has not applied for public financial support, and has therefore not received such support.

vi. Lack of local turn out?

Skarverennet is based on the effort of volunteers, and most of these are local. Big local support is therefore one of the main reasons for the success of the event. It is clear that the financial success, both for the event and for the local community, stimulates the interest among the volunteers.

vii. External pressure from economical/public interests.

With the starting point of a big event in a valuable and vulnerable natural area, which is going through a process of protection in the shape of the establishment of a national park. It will only be natural that it receives some pressure from local and central protection interests. Through its ability to lead a continuous and professional dialogue with the protection interests, Geilo IL has managed to gain trust, also from this direction. It is also clear that the large financial turnover tied to Skarverennet, contributes to the consideration of the event also among the protection interests. A fact supporting this last statement is that the interests with which a dialogue has been hardest to establish, are the local interests tied to the starting point at Finse (Ulvik kommune, Hordaland fylke). It is here that the financial consequences are the least.

viii. Other difficulties

In 2002 a regulation was introduced, making the use of helmets obligatory in all traffic involving transport of people on snowmobiles. These created large difficulties for all transport in the mountains, either in regards to the safety set up or just the transportation of officials. The restrictions have since been modified through, among other, approving alpine helmets for the use on snowmobiles and other exceptions.

Can any of these difficulties/challenges be related to the localisation in the mountains?

Some of these difficulties/challenges are general, while the challenges in relation to the environment/protection interests are clearly related to the localisation in the mountains.

4 – Policy background and public intervention

4.1 Policy framework that affect the project

Political/administrative relations:

National/state level:

1. General development in the agricultural politics, where it can be found that the demands on efficiency and price make it difficult to sustain small scale farming in the mountain regions.
2. Political objectives regarding protection of different nature qualities are often controversial and there are often conflicts between state administration and local public administration/local business interests.

Regional/local level:

1. The area planning is administered and carried out at local levels, but with clear guidelines for certain sectors, for example environmental protection. Certain state administrations shall approve decisions and have the power to stop plans.
2. The administration of the ”Law for motor traffic in outlying fields” is carried out at a local level, and it has been found differences in interpretation from kommune to kommune, but central guidelines are trying to secure a similar practise. For Skarverennet this will include both the use of snowmobiles and landing with helicopters.

Financial information

i. Public contributions – self-financing?

Skarverennet has not applied for public funding, and has therefore not been given any. The project is 100% self financed.

ii. Turnover – distribution of income

Skareverennet has income in the shape of

1. Entrance fee
2. Sponsors/sale of advertisements
3. Other income

Other forms of support

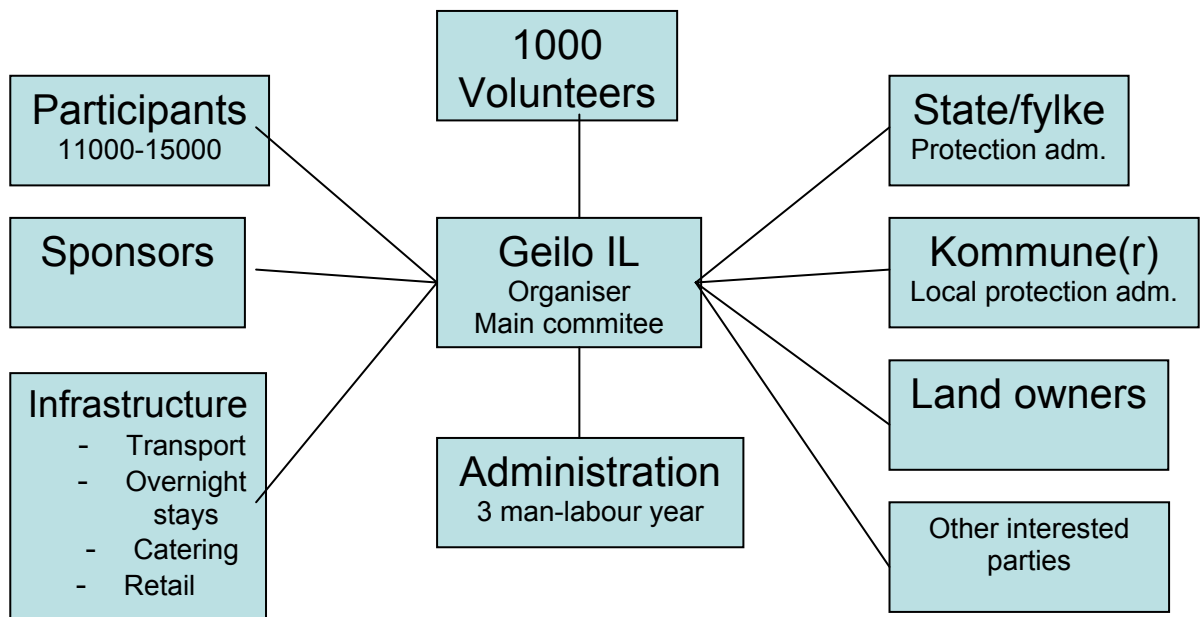
The project has accepted consultation with regards to environmental protection questions in connection with the regular dialogue with the state administration in this area. This has been cost free for the organisers.

**5 – Local/ Regional delivery Mechanism
or
Cooperation and Partnership Public/ Private**

5.1 Cooperation and the delivery agents

THE CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER PARTIES (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)

Commercial side Organiser side Administration side



6 - Evaluation of local results of activity

6.1 Effectiveness of the project

EVALUATION

Have the goals been reached?

Skarverennet is a success, both for the organisers, Geilo IL, and for the businesses of the local area (Hol kommune and the neighbouring kommuner). When the event in addition has secured viable development conditions within a newly established national park, it has to be concluded that the goals have been reached. This is a good example of successful business conduct in the mountain region.

Can the level of goal achievement be quantified?

Even if the goals have not been quantified, the level of goal achievement should be close to 100%.

Who has the main responsibility for success?

There are many contributors who must share the credit for the success. The main responsibility must be given to the organisers Geilo IL, which has developed the idea of a large and profitable event that, in addition, has an approved environmental profile. The ability and the will to think long-term, take charge of unfortunate incidents and create a positive dialogue with all the parties involved, has characterized Geilo IL's work. Local political participants in interaction with the local environmental administrators have also given important contributions to the success, with clear signals to the central governing powers and through good advice to the organiser regarding environmental questions. The state protection administration has shown understanding for the importance of the event for Hol kommune, and thereby given Skarverennet the opportunity to develop, even within a national park.

