

Rustad Skog

Monday, August 14 - Forestry and nature (M3)



Facts

Farm: Nordre Rustad Owner: Nils H. Rustad

(Nordre Rustad: Nordre means north and Rustad means a clearing made in the forest.)

Location: Located in the municipality of Elverum, Hedmark County

Size: 1100 hectares (2750 acres) - 97% forest/3% agricultural land.

Elevation: 200 to 750 meters above sea level

Rustad Skog is the name of the forest belonging to the Rustad farm. (*Skog* means forest in Norwegian)

History

After the Black Plague (1347-1351), most of the population in the district died out. The Rustad farm area was not inhabited again until the 1600s. Remains of arrowheads and other weapons tell us that Vikings once lived on the area now known as Nordre Rustad. An interesting note: Mary Rustad has translated two old books and has had them published as a book about folklore and folk medicine. "The Black Books of Elverum" were found in the farm's attic and include the historical background of people who lived on the farm, and beliefs of the population living in the Hedmark district around 1700. The book is in English and can be purchased at the farm, or over the internet.

Today

The present owner of the farm is the 14th since 1600.

Nils Rustad is married to Mary. She is originally from Colorado, USA, but has roots on the Rustad farm. Mary and Nils have 3 children, aged 21, 26 and 28.

Until 1980 the farm was managed in a more traditional way. The main source of income came from logging of spruce and pine, and agricultural products; oats and barley. The hunting of moose and other game was just mainly for recreation.

After 1980 other sources of income to support the farm have been explored. There are two main reasons for this:

1. The farm needed to strengthen its economy due to a fall of agricultural and timber prices.
2. The owner's interest in using resources on the farm to create jobs and help stop the flight of people from rural Norway to the urban centres.

Moose hunting was made into a business, the selling of meat from 10 moose a year, and guiding hunters was sold to tourists through a network of forest owners. The farm also held courses for hunters and nature lovers.

A water business was started in 1996 and now is one of the farms most important sources of income. 30 tons of natural spring water from the farm is sold in Norway every day. There are plans of exporting water to the USA in 2007, and later to other parts of the world.

Through NaturCompaniet (Nature Company), the farm is selling *a quality control of product competence* to tourist businesses in Norway. The company is owned by forest owners in Norway, who are selling nature experiences, such as, hunting, fishing, skiing, and the list goes on.

Politically there are challenges. This is due to the rapid change of political parties in power, which makes it hard to foresee "what is coming next".

However, the present government has decided to help back the development of the tourist industry in Norway. Farms and "A living country side" are an important part of this new strategy. This new approach might make it possible for more farmers to hold on to their properties in the future.

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