

Artikkel Dalane Tidende, Ingunn Walderhaug, 03.06.23 10:30

<https://www.dalane-tidende.no/nye-daglig-leder-og-ny-prosjektleder-startet-samme-dag-dette-er-vel-sa-mye-dalane-sitt-prosjekt-som-det-er-norge-mineraler-sitt-prosjekt/s/5-101-585462>

The new managing director and new project director started the same day: "This is just as much Dalane's project as it is Norge Mineralers' project



FIRST DAY AT THE OFFICE: Project Director Jørgen Stenvold (left) and Managing Director Olav Skalmeraas (right) had their first working day at Norge Mineraler on Thursday, but the first office day on Friday. Here they test out the magnetism in some rock samples on display. Photo: Ingunn Walderhaug

They both have great faith in Norge Mineralers' mining project in Dalane. Now Olav Skalmeraas takes over as managing director, and Jørgen Stenvold as project director, while the company enters a new phase.

Norge Mineraler got a new project director in Jørgen Stenvold on Thursday – and a new managing director in Olav Skalmeraas.

The first day at work was not the typical kind, with office tours and greeting rounds with the employees. The whole day was spent at the Egersund conference – a useful introduction," Stenvold points out. In an effective way, they got to meet representatives from all over the business community in Dalane, hear about ongoing local projects – and at the same time make up their minds about the temperament and culture of the Dalane region.

"It was refreshing to see that there is a culture of value creation here," summarizes Stenvold, who is from Northern Norway.

If that analysis is correct, the culture will come in handy in the job he will be doing. As project director, he is responsible, as he puts it, for the entire Norge Mineralers project in Dalane.



Olav Skalmeraas

Olav Skalmeraas was elected to the board of Norge Mineraler at the turn of the year and has therefore already become acquainted with the company.

He is an engineer and economist and has mainly worked within oil, gas and power, including in Hydro and Equinor, Veritas and Saga Petroleum. During his career, he has lived in eight countries – including gaining knowledge of mining through a stay in South America for Hydro. He has also worked with CO₂ storage, as well as project development and project control – which will also be relevant in the job as Managing Director of Norge Mineraler.

As managing director, Skalmeraas will take care of the day-to-day operation of the office, keep in touch with investors and the owners of the company.

The funnel is still wide

Managing Director Skalmeraas was quite clear in his speech on his first day at work – [and stated that there will be activity](#). Today, he wants to nuance it.

– We still have both technical and economic analyses and impact assessments that must be carried out to arrive at a final decision," he emphasises.

Even though large amounts of data from the test drilling have been analysed, and even though they now know far more about the deposits of minerals in the relevant areas of Helleland and Ualand than they did just a few years ago, there is still a need for more data.

"There's a lot we don't know. The more information we get, the more rounds of further investigation we have to take," Stenvold explains.

He compares the work to a funnel.

"A lot of ideas go into the funnel before it narrows down more and more. For now, the funnel is still very wide.



Jørgen Stenvold

Jørgen Stenvold holds a master's degree in resource geology from NTNU. He has worked in Store norske Spitsbergen Kullkompani for ten years, as operations engineer in the mine and finally as exploration director. Furthermore, for twelve years he has worked in Yara International, with business development and as a professional assistant for mining operations. Among other things, he was chairman of a project Yara had in Ethiopia, where he was involved in the development of a mining project from the first borehole all the way to a principled development decision.

As project director at Norge Mineraler, he is in short overall responsible for the project.

Everyone wants answers, preferably yesterday

Many questions can therefore not be answered yet. Everyone wants as much information as possible as quickly as possible – citizens, politicians, the press, and investors want clarifications and decisions.

It is a balancing act, Skalmerraas and Stenvold explain, between being as open and transparent as possible, while at the same time not promising things one cannot keep or must go back on. It can create confusion and distrust, they know.

At the same time, they fully understand that it can create frustration that one does not know *whether* there will be mining, when *there will be mining* – and not least, *where there will be mining*.

"But in such an important process, we must be fact-based and present well-analysed consequences," concludes Skalmerraas.

A new world situation generates new interest

However, not everything is completely out of the blue. Norge Mineraler maintains that there are mainly two areas that are considered most interesting: The area covering Hetland and Storeknuten east of Helleland, and the Øygrei area west of Teksevatn. They also maintain that the deposits are of such a large size that it would be profitable to operate a mine.

One of the objections that has been raised is that the deposits were already known, but that it has not previously been relevant to start mining in the area. To which Stenvold replies that it is not just a matter of becoming much better acquainted with the actual deposits as a result of Norge Mineraler's new and more extensive investigations.

It's also about the fact that the world situation is new," he says. There is great interest in minerals from Europe, large deposits have already been extracted in many places, and the need for minerals is steadily increasing. A new mine can also be developed based on completely new standards and requirements that differ from existing mines.

"A lot of the work has been done; A huge resource has been mapped – and then it's about how to develop the deposit in a way that can create the greatest possible value for everyone," says Stenvold.

– Will have both negative and positive consequences

Therefore, one must be conscious of every step one takes, every choice one makes throughout the process. Nothing should be wasted, neither money, time

nor actual natural resources. While something may be cheapest today, something else may pay off in the longer term.

He puts nothing in between; There will be consequences, both negative and positive, if Norge Mineraler initiates mining operations in the area.

"But this is just as much Dalane's project as it is Norge Mineraler's project. When the footprint is so large, and it will have both negative and positive consequences for everyone, then everyone must also be able to gain from it. An acceptable development solution must be found where the negative consequences do not predominate the overall picture.

He knows this process well. In the phase they are now in, there are no technical challenges that can stop the project. What can stop it is if the resistance becomes too great.



HAPPY TO TAKE THE DEBATE: Jørgen Stenvold and Olav Skalmeraas welcome input and questions but are clear that there are many questions that cannot be answered yet. Photo: Ingunn Walderhaug

Welcome input

Too much resistance is of course not something Norge Mineraler is interested in, and therefore emphasizes dialogue with the local community and politicians.

They say they appreciate all input, even though they are still in the early stages.

"Knowing what is important to people is very important to include," says public affairs officer Erik Joa.

The debate can be refreshing, they believe. Joa refers to a long dialogue and interesting exchanges with citizens and committed groups such as La Dalane Leve. He says they have a standing invitation to continue the dialogue.

They also encourage anyone with questions and input to attend the public meetings the company organizes on a regular basis.

Will hire more soon

In the future, work is to be done on impact assessments, in addition to continuation of analyses after the actual test drilling. It is clear to MD Skalmeraas that the company will have an increasing need for competent employees.

"We need project expertise, professional expertise in chemical processes and in the systematic mapping of consequences – about processes that must be completed to do this in accordance with best international practice. There are international standards that define what is expected, and many are comprehensive and go beyond legal requirements. Capital-intensive projects like this must be accessible to large international investors, whom have special environmental requirements," he says.

Have a clear opinion that they will hire more already this year.

This was one of the reasons why Jørgen Stenvold took the job as project director at Norge Mineraler he says.

"There's a bunch of highly educated young and eager geologists out in the hallway here. How can I stimulate further drive and strengthen expertise, so that more and more can be done by the local team here?"



THE TEAM: These are all current employees at Norge Mineraler's office at Langholmen in Eigersund. Photo: Ingunn Walderhaug