

Opinion

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Thursday, May 13, 1982

What is FEMA up to? Come tonight

What in the world is FEMA up to?

We might find out tonight.

Over the last 12 to 18 months, FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Administration) has been sending a multitude of warnings to Skagit County elected officials.

The problem is that this federal agency has been less than candid about what's *really* up their sleeve.

At various times these officials have threatened withdrawal of federal disaster insurance unless Skagit County designates a so-called "floodway" big enough to carry the overflow of the hypothetical 100-year flood. No new construction of any kind will be allowed in such a floodway.

And construction in the floodplain proper is severely restricted to heights above the 100-year flood level.

The problem is that such a designation might mean a total halt to any and all future growth in Mount Vernon or Burlington — as well as in other areas of Skagit County less directly affected — a

bigger disaster than the 100-year flood itself.

FEMA has yet to accept the county's recommended method of handling this problem.

Now FEMA is locked in combat with the City of Mount Vernon over compliance with other sections of their regulations.

They will meet the public tonight to explain why Mount Vernon may be kicked out of FEMA's insurance program.

The July 1 deadline to comply with the agency's flood insurance construction regulations is rapidly approaching. FEMA cannot be ignored nor brushed aside. Neither can the no-growth freeze which would paralyze this Valley.

There is some evidence that FEMA may be just going through the motions before they do what they want to do, anyway. And if that turns out to be the case, they are going to get an earfull from us.

In the meantime — if you care about the future of our community, you had better come and listen as FEMA officials face the public at 7:30 at Hillcrest Park Lodge tonight.

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