

FEMA's Skagit activities call for political attention

Considering the tremendous social, economic and political effects its activities have on the residents of Skagit County, it is amazing how little public comment the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has drawn from this area's elected officials.

After a particularly blatant incident last year involving arrogant FEMA officials and upriver Skagit residents, Congressman Al Swift reported that he had met with FEMA administrators to suggest they clean up their act, at least on his turf.

Beyond this slap on the wrist, however, FEMA officials gave openly operated for over a year in this county with little or no further comment by top Skagit politicians.

The latest FEMA action, announced last week by Mount Vernon city officials, was to visit the county seat to issue a no-win ultimatum to the Mount Vernon City Council.

"It's not our job to tell you which course you should take," FEMA representatives told local officials, "but you will have 30 days from our formal notification to adopt strict flood control regulations or suffer the consequences of being dropped from the federal flood insurance program."

According to Mount Vernon building official Ron Maynock, both options spell disaster for this city — and ultimately for other Skagit communities as well.

Strict FEMA regulations, said Maynock, would essentially prohibit further development or major renovation of buildings and homes in most of the city.

If the regulations are not approved, however, federally insured loans will be impossible to receive and flood insurance will simply not be available.

Maynock, a vocal critic of FEMA tactics, skates right to the edge of suggesting a course of action in the wake of FEMA's ultimatum. His suggestion to concerned residents? Contact your city councilmember and let him know your feelings.

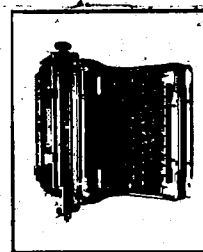
It is the position of The Argus that Skagit residents take this recommendation even further.

Members of the Mount Vernon city staff deserve the public support of the mayor and the city council. Members of the Skagit River Flood Control Advisory Committee deserve public and political support from the county commissioners, state legislators and Congressman Swift.

FEMA was created to serve the American public — not the other way around. It is time the politicians representing Skagit residents made that point emphatically clear.

S.H.B.

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**Byline,
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