

City wins appeal

Feds to review flood figures

by John Draper

MOUNT VERNON — Officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have agreed with many concerned citizens here and will therefore doublecheck elevation figures used in the federal flood insurance program.

In a letter written to Mayor Ruth Gidlund late last week, William Mayer, FEMA regional director, said the decision to doublecheck the Army Corps of Engineers' flood depth data resulted from a technical appeal of that data written by City Engineer John Wiseman.

Wiseman explained the guts of the appeal was that the volume of water the

Corps claimed would be in Mount Vernon didn't square with their claim that a good portion of the 100-year flood waters would be released by dike breaks at Sterling and Avon.

The August 2 date is the second extension the city has received on the decision of whether to stay in the flood insurance program. Gidlund had written FEMA asking for an extension until Nov. 1, 1982.

In place of the Army Corps' data, the city should use a federally-approved "test of reasonableness" in determining how high new structures in the floodplain should be elevated, Mayer wrote.

This test includes "use of historical

data, high water marks, photographs of past flooding, etc., where available," according to federal regulations.

This test doesn't include word of mouth, according to Chuck Steele, FEMA official working on the Mount Vernon problem.

At every public hearing on the flood insurance program, residents complained about the flood depths used in the program, backing up their complaints with either their own flood observations or with stories told them by relatives.

Steele said doublechecking the Corps' figures could take anywhere from a month to a year.

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