

# Land-use proposal by FEMA unacceptable

Officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) must be playing the old budget request game in reverse.

The budget game, for those unfamiliar with it, is to ask for \$10 when you only need \$6. The theory, of course, is that unless you exaggerate your need, the boys holding the pursestrings will leave you short.

This week, after months of quiet work in Washington, D.C., FEMA officials released new Skagit County flood elevation figures — and a bombshell recommendation that only 10 percent development be allowed on property in the Skagit River floodplain.

In other words, you would be allowed to build on only 10 percent of any land you own in the floodplain of the Skagit River.

That policy would be palatable for those who own large parcels of land, but rendering 90 percent of a small piece of property useless is unacceptable. Who needs an outhouse when you can't even build a one-room cabin?

Several months ago, a volunteer committee of Skagit citizens recommended that only 25 percent of any parcel in the floodplain be restricted from development.

Perhaps that figure, too, is unrealistic, but it appears FEMA has decided to argue the other extreme in an effort to extend land-use regulations dramatically in the Skagit Valley.

City and county officials have expressed optimism that FEMA officials will be willing to negotiate and compromise on the land-use issues, regardless of the content of their latest report.

We believe those negotiations should be preceded by a more realistic indication on behalf of the federal government that there will be due consideration given to the property rights of the Skagit County citizen.

The "pawns" in this game deserve every effort to protect their interests.