

Data lacking on slough,

By MARK MORROW
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BURLINGTON — The chief engineer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency has denied Nookachamps farmer Larry Kunzler's request to designate Gages Slough as a regulatory floodway under the National Flood Insurance Program.

At the same time, however, the engineer discredited the hydrology report included in the environmental impact statement for the proposed Cascade Mall.

"This has far-reaching implications," Kunzler said upon getting a letter outlining FEMA's position from Brian R. Mrazik, chief of the engineering branch, natural hazards division. "There's enough evidence to have them (the mall developers)

re-issue the environmental impact statement. At the least, they need a complete topographical study," Kunzler added.

Mrazik told Kunzler by certified mail last week that a lack of adequate topographic mapping and field survey data prevents FEMA from determining the distribution of floodflows between Gages Slough and the area north of Burlington.

"The 63,000 cubic-feet-per-second discharge identified by John E. Norman for Gages Slough in the Cascade Mall EIS is not supported by any scientific or technical data and must be considered as speculation," Mrazik said. "The carrying capacity of Gages Slough and the overbank areas is also not known due to a

says FEMA

lack of adequate topographic and field survey data."

A complete topographic study was exactly what Kunzler demanded last week in a hearing before the Burlington city council. Kunzler used almost the exact same words in describing the Norman report contained in the EIS, but Kunzler said he never got the letter from Mrazik until Friday — the day after the council meeting.

FEMA officials did not take a stand on the mall itself, and spokesmen for Armada/Lagerquist, the project developers, were unavailable for comment on the letter.

Burlington City Supervisor Stan Kersey said he doesn't know what, if anything, the letter means for the city's plan to

locate a 647,450-square-foot regional shopping mall just north of Gages Slough, between Interstate 5 and Gari Street.

"We've never gotten anything but a preliminary map from FEMA," Kersey said. "We haven't got the rest of the report."

Kersey said the city council would have to go through more engineering data as well as the information provided by Kunzler and by FEMA before knowing whether a complete topographical study should be required of the mall developers.

"That's something for the experts to check on," Kersey said.

Mrazik indicated 100-year-flood flows would cross Interstate 5 for two miles "in the vicinity of Burlington." He said the dry

spots would be only at elevated portions of the freeway. One such low spot occurs between the Hopper interchange and Rio Vista. Kunzler said he's clocked that stretch at eight-tenths of a mile.

"Almost half the area that's going to be overtopped is adjacent to the mall," Kunzler said.

"It tells me that Gages Slough is a path that floodwaters will travel."

Kunzler also contended Mrazik's conclusions prove the mall EIS is based on insufficient data and that legal grounds exist for demanding a new EIS and starting the public hearing process all over again.

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