

Less county land in floodplains

BY BILLY BALL
Staff Writer

MONROE

New state maps could clear the way for development on thousands of Union County acres that used to be floodplains.

County commissioners, at their Sept. 15 meeting, will consider an updated flood ordinance that blocks, in many cases, building on 26,751 acres.

Previously, more than 35,000 Union County acres fell under floodplain regulations established in 1994.

"So actually the amount of floodplain in the county has been reduced," county Planning Director Dick Black said.

A map of the new zones is available on the county's Web site, but Black said the state's maps will exclude some areas currently thought to pose a flooding risk while absorbing others that were considered exempt.

"With new technology, they actually got a better read on exactly where the floodplain is," he said.

New construction in these areas is banned except in cases where the county and the Federal Emergency Management Agency approve a study that finds development won't affect the flood levels.

Currently, builders have to seek a variance from the Union

County Board of Adjustment after the study, but Black said that won't be necessary under the new ordinance.

"It's eliminating a step," he said.

The new articles are also expanded to make way for a few "administrative changes," Black said.

The amendments will affect unincorporated parts of Union County, as well as Hemby Bridge and Lake Park.

The commissioners' Sept. 15 meeting, set for 7 p.m. in the Union County Government Center, will include a public hearing on the zoning change.

— *Billy Ball can be reached at 704-261-2226 or bball@theej.com.*