

OPINION LETTERS

LIRR's new fare system, MTA overtime, Blydenburgh dam, Gateway tunnel project

A narrow stream flows through what was once Stump Pond at Blydenburgh County Park in Smithtown last May. The water drained from the pond when a dam broke during a heavy rainfall in August 2024. Credit: Newsday/John Paraskevas

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Leave dysfunction behind for a change

The fight to save the Nissequogue River tells us a great deal about what is wrong with Long Island ["Experts warn new dam risks harm," Letters, Feb. 3].

Following a dam failure in 2024 that drained Stump Pond in Blydenburgh County Park, environmental groups spelled out the unequivocal advantages of a free-flowing river, including habitat for multiple native fish species and rare Atlantic white cedar, as well as a riparian border that sequesters carbon and improves water quality. But despite the detriments of re-damming, residents still want Stump Pond remade.

This backward thinking reveals itself in too many local policy debates. The Town of Huntington, for example, refuses to implement an approved ban of polluting gas leaf blowers. Other municipalities, enforcing outdated codes, bully progressive homeowners who create ecologically friendly gardens. Elsewhere, Long Islanders continue to fertilize grass lawns, disregarding the environmental cost.

A sustainable future requires science-backed change. The desire to recreate Stump Pond stems from misguided nostalgia for a flawed and outdated idea of green space.

Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery," once a staple of high school curricula, taught students the need to abandon dysfunctional tradition. It's time to have the imagination and courage to put away the unsustainable past. Let the river run.

— Wendy Ryden, Oyster Bay