



For Immediate Release

Suffolk County Legislature Approves Dam Construction Without Full Environmental Review

Suffolk County, New York — **March 11, 2026**

On Tuesday, March 10, the Suffolk County Legislature approved the county’s proposal to construct a new dam in Blydenburgh County Park without requiring a comprehensive environmental review, determining that the proposed project would not have a significant impact on the environment.

The decision overlooks the numerous potential adverse impacts identified and presented in formal submissions and public comments by Seatuck and the twenty nonprofit organizations that make up the *Free the Nissequogue River Coalition*.

Most significantly, the proposed dam would permanently flood the robust natural restoration that has taken hold since the 2024 Stump Pond Dam failure. The former pond site now includes two miles of free-flowing cold water stream habitat and 120 acres of diverse freshwater wetlands and riparian habitat along the floodplain.

In just one growing season, botanists have confirmed that more than 120 plant species have grown from the seedbank in the former pond bottom, nearly three quarters of which are native species. This vigorous growth has already attracted countless pollinators and other insects, birds, and wildlife. According to data on eBird (the worldwide publicly-sourced bird database) 12 new species of birds have been documented using the park since the dam failure along with “high counts” for 46 additional species.

John Turner, a senior conservation advocate at Seatuck, said, “the natural restoration that is underway on the site of the former stump pond, which has significantly



diversified the habitat in the park, is by every ecological measure, more valuable than an artificial warm-water impoundment.”

In addition, coalition members also raised concern about the downstream impact of a new impoundment. Water released from the shallow impoundment would be significantly warmer than natural river temperatures, potentially harming native species adapted to cold-water habitats. In addition, the dam would alter the natural role the river plays in transporting sediments and nutrients downstream to support the overall ecological health of Long Island Sound.

The warm-water pond created by the proposed dam would favor non-native and invasive species, including largemouth bass, grass carp, and hydrilla, all of which would have a negative impact on native species. Even with a fish ladder in place, the impoundment would act as a thermal barrier, restricting the movement of fish and wildlife, effectively isolating native brook trout and other cold-water species to small portions of the waterway.

The proposed dam would also impact nearby homeowners. Since the dam failure, residents along the eastern edge of Blydenburgh County Park have reported significantly lower groundwater levels, resulting in reduced basement flooding and fewer issues with sump pumps and flooded cesspools. Some homeowners have remarked it’s the best conditions they’ve seen in decades, in some cases for more than 40 years. Because the proposed dam would be more than two feet higher than the previous structure and hold more water during storm events, those improvements could be reversed.

While yesterday’s vote is a significant disappointment, the debate over the future of the Nissequogue River doesn’t end here. The proposal must still obtain several permits from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Seatuck’s executive director, Enrico Nardone, confirmed that “Seatuck and the Free the Nissequogue River Coalition will continue to advocate for a free-flowing Nissequogue River, which we remain confident is the wise choice for Suffolk County from a fiscal, climate resilience, and ecological perspective.”



About Seaturck Environmental Association:

Seaturck Environmental Association is dedicated to conserving Long Island wildlife and the environment. The organization pursues its mission by advocating for wildlife and advancing conservation projects, engaging community scientists in wildlife research, and offering high-quality environmental education opportunities for Long Islanders of all ages.

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