A series of immense glacial lakes once filled the Puget Lowlands. The lakes were formed when fresh water from the melting ice was impounded between the continental glacier that filled the Puget Sound Basin and the surrounding mountains. As the glacier advanced and retreated, it carved out valleys and created a series of lakes that filled and emptied over time. The size of the glacial lakes were controlled by various drainage channels located at the south end of the Puget Lowlands. As the glacier melted and successively lower lake levels occurred, the Bear Creek Valley became a protected inlet between Education Hill and Union Hill. Bretz located the outlets and the lake that occurred at the highest elevation above sea level was Lake Puyallup. Bretz located two drainage channels for the lake, one at 550-600 feet above sea level in the Snoqualmie River Valley on the east and the other at 450-500 feet in the Stillaguamish River Valley on the west. The hillsides of the Bear Creek Valley record more than 50 minor shoreline terraces and 6 major lake terraces. The lake terraces provide significant evidence that the series of glacial lakes that occurred as the Vashon Lobe was receding, long after its maximum southward advance and maximum ice thickness. Although the Puget Sound Basin had been depressed by the weight of the ice, the land was no longer isostatically depressed since the last ice retreat. More significantly, the lake was not under the glacier. It was beside the glacier. Lake Puyallup was 1 mile wide and 5 miles long, and the outlet channel was 2 miles wide at its mouth. All flat land at higher elevations in the Puget Sound Basin was probably created by the melting of the glacier. The glacial lakes are gone, but salmon still return to their ancestral birth streams, streams increased incrementally year after year.

It is important to note the glacial lakes occurred as the Vashon Lobe was receding, long after its maximum southward advance and maximum ice thickness. Although the Puget Sound Basin had been depressed by the weight of the ice, the land was no longer isostatically depressed since the last ice retreat. More significantly, the lake was not under the glacier. It was beside the glacier. Lake Puyallup was 1 mile wide and 5 miles long, and the outlet channel was 2 miles wide at its mouth. All flat land at higher elevations in the Puget Sound Basin was probably created by the melting of the glacier. The glacial lakes are gone, but salmon still return to their ancestral birth streams, streams increased incrementally year after year.