

Beloved Hawai'i Island bakery left devastated by Hurricane Lala

Hawai'i Public Radio | By [Maddie Bender](#)

Published August 18, 2026 at 2:19 PM HST



LISTEN • 7:16



Troy Gacayan

Mud, rocks, and debris cover the ground around Punalu'u Bake Shop in Nā'ālehu on Hawai'i Island in the wake of Hurricane Lala on Aug. 16, 2026.

In Nā'ālehu on Hawai'i Island sits [Punalu'u Bake Shop](#), a sweetbread bakery that sells thousands of its famous malasadas every day and attracts nearly half a million visitors

After Hurricane Lala, however, the beloved local business was left devastated by storm damage.

General Manager Zach Kennedy sent out an update early Monday morning with [before-and-after photos](#) of the area. The bake shop, bakery and outdoor gazebo were all caked with mud and debris.



Zach Kennedy / Punalu'u Bake Shop

Before-and-after photos taken on Aug. 17, 2026, show the extent of the storm damage suffered by Punalu'u Bakery on Hawai'i Island after Hurricane Lala.

Kennedy spoke with HPR about how the bakery, and the community it supports, has been coping with the catastrophic damage.

“At about like 9 o’clock at night, something dramatically shifted,” he said, recalling the night of the storm.

“One of the waterways broke free and caused a wall of water to come down the hill, and it took out the cemetery, and it caused a tremendous amount of rock, mud, tree debris to go right through the bakery.”



Local News

Hurricane sounded like 'giant swarm of bees': residents share Lala stories

Kennedy told HPR that he was left without power after the storm, leaving him disconnected from his employees.



Michelle Broder Van Dyke / HPR, File

“It's been incredibly emotionally draining ... not being able to communicate with them and check with them if they're okay, it causes a lot of worry,” he said. “They're our family. We take care of each other.”

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, Kennedy was able to recover some of the bakery's products to aid his community.

“Being able to give the product that was still good to the community to help them out, it was number one priority today ... and I'm just so grateful that it was still cold, frozen, and ready to be handed out to hundreds of people.”

Punalu'u Bake Shop is not alone, as many communities in the Ka'u district were among the hardest-hit areas after Hurricane Lala.

HPR-1 - News and information

Hawaii Radio Hour

In a press conference given on Monday, Hawai'i Gov. Josh Green and Hawai'i County Mayor Kimo Alameda confirmed one fatality from floods in the area.



Local News

Officials give an update of Lala's aftermath on Hawai'i Island, including one death

As the area recovers, Kennedy encourages supporters to keep the area clear for community members and to remain engaged with their recovery efforts.

"It's going to take us time to start clearing it out, and then start planning for the future," he told HPR.

"I just want to take a moment to thank the community who helped us distribute product out today, and you know, stay tuned. We'll give you guys updates and we'll try to come back stronger and better than before."

This story aired on [The Conversation](#) on Aug. 18, 2026. The Conversation airs weekdays at 11 a.m. Jinwook Lee adapted this story for the web.

To help others or find resources in the wake of Hurricane Lala, click [here](#).

Tags

[The Conversation](#)[Hawai'i Island](#)[Weather](#)[Flood Recovery](#)[disaster recovery](#)

Maddie Bender

Maddie Bender was the executive producer of The Conversation until August 2026. She also provided production assistance on HPR's "This Is Our Hawai'i" podcast.

HPR-1 - News See stories by [Maddie Bender](#)
Hawaii Radio Hour