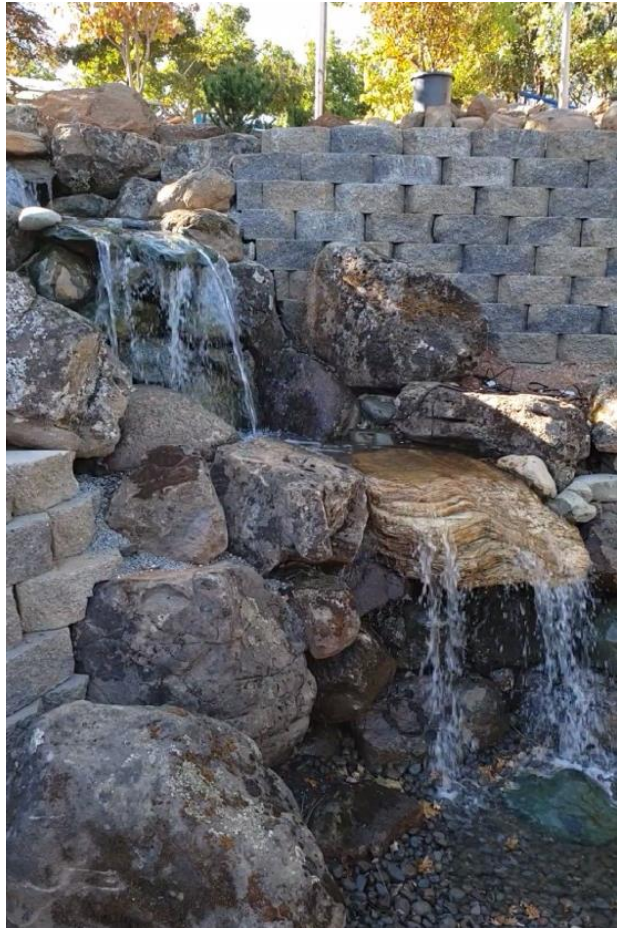


From Bare Slope to Living Water

How Contractor Judgment and Trusted Products Transformed a Difficult Hillside



(Finished recirculating waterfall, Paradise, California)

The Challenge

Water-feature products do not prove their value in a catalog. They prove it on the jobsite.

For Scott Conner Landscape, one of the toughest examples came on a hillside property in Paradise, California.

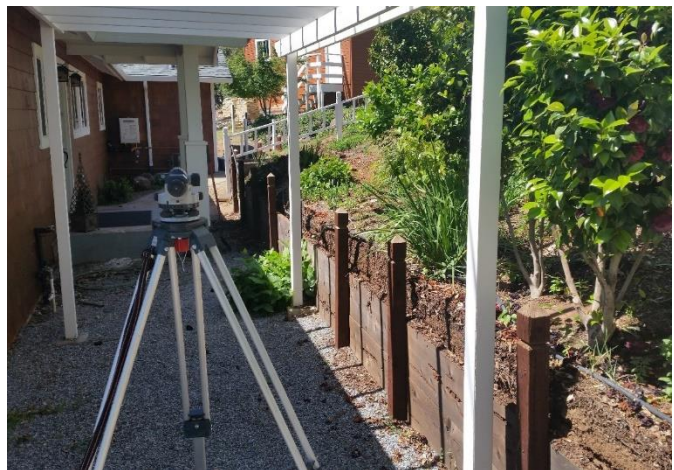
The homeowners wanted a natural-looking water feature they could see and enjoy from the front of their home. But there was almost no usable front yard. An existing retaining wall stood roughly seven feet from the front door. Behind it, the ground rose several feet and continued uphill. The backyard dropped toward the canyon, leaving little room there either.

Scott's solution was to cut back the front hillside, retain it, and create an entirely new landscape area.

That meant solving much more than where to place a recirculating waterfall.

“When you’re on the hillside, you gotta deal with drainage, erosion, and the proper landscape irrigation system to function correctly in a situation like that,” Scott said.

“The first major thing you always look at is drainage, the grades, how it’s going to affect the whole property,” he said.



(The original front-yard slope and retaining wall)

Before the final grade could take shape, the crew removed the existing landscape and retaining wall, excavated the hillside, installed drainage, conduits, and main lines, and then built a series of retaining walls. The driveway presented another problem. Its steepest section ran toward the garage, requiring Scott to regrade the area and create drainage that carried water away from the house.



(Retaining walls and corrected driveway grade)

The Product Decision

Scott had built water features for more than three decades by the time he took on the project. Product selection is where experience pays off.

When asked what product line he considered for the water feature, his answer was immediate:

“Only one. Without a doubt: Aquascape.”

“Because they’re reliable. They’re the best product I’ve seen,” he said. “I do my research on what’s out there on the market.”

He looked beyond whether a product could simply do the job.

A less expensive pump might move the required water, Scott explained, but efficiency, warranty and operating cost were part of the decision too. He valued Aquascape pumps for their longer warranty, lower amperage, and variable-speed control.

He also preferred heavier liner, along with thick protective pads beneath the larger boulders, because rock placement, settling and movement can all create puncture risk. The reservoir system mattered, too. Scott preferred Aquascape’s AquaBlox system because it helped manage the water and made cleaning easier than a rock-filled basin.

For a contractor, those details add up to more than a product specification. They reduce the chances of problems after the job is finished.

The Build

Once the underground work and major grading were complete, the landscape could begin taking shape.

But building a natural-looking water feature takes more than following dimensions on a plan—even one Scott designed himself, as he did on this project.

Scott grew up hiking canyons and fishing with his father. He watched how real streams behaved—why a stream turned, where it flattened, what created ripples, and how flow changed both movement and sound.

That experience became part of the way he built.

With rubber liner, thick protective pads beneath the larger boulders, and careful rock placement, he could recreate those natural patterns without relying on concrete. The added protection was key because rock movement and settling can create puncture risk over time. His goal was simple: make the finished feature look as though it belonged there.



(The transformed front yard)

Then came the part he could not determine on paper.

The sound.

“As you’re putting it together, you never know what that’s going to be like until you turn that pump on the first time,” Scott said.

He doesn’t wait until the project is completely finished.

“I always turn it on before I’m finished. I get that feel, that sound and see if I can tune it differently. Provide another type sound or, if it’s great, leave it just like it is.”

The variable-speed pump gave him another level of control. The homeowners could lower the flow for quieter water or increase it when they wanted more sound.

This is the part of the story a spec sheet cannot tell—the judgment calls, the site-specific problem-solving, and how the product responds when the plan meets the ground.

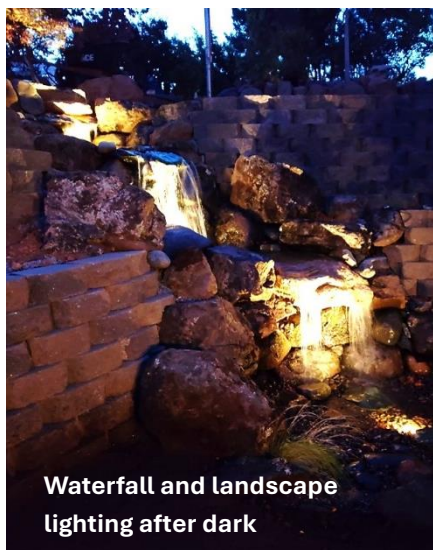
The Result

What had been an unusable slope became a landscaped front yard with retaining walls, lawn, ornamental specimen trees and other plantings, a patio, and a natural-looking waterfall designed to appear spring-fed. One they could see and hear from the house.

At night, landscape lighting gave the whole setting another dimension.

“They were very pleased,” Scott recalled. “With the lights at night on it, wow... they enjoyed being outside. They can sit at their little patio that we designed. They loved it.”

There was no chance to see how the feature would perform over the years.



Waterfall and landscape lighting after dark

Two weeks after the project was completed, the Camp Fire swept through Paradise. The homeowners lost their home, just as Scott and Paula Conner lost theirs.

The landscape’s hardscape survived.

Scott believes that with power and water restored, the feature would have run again.

What the Sales Sheet Can’t Show

A product claim can explain what something is designed to do.

A contractor story shows what happens when that product is trusted in the field—with site conditions changing, a client watching, and the contractor’s reputation attached to the finished job.

Scott chose Aquascape because he trusted the products, understood how they performed, and knew what they allowed him to create.

When asked what an Aquascape sales representative should put in the brochure after seeing a project like this, Scott didn’t mention flow rates, liner thickness, or pump efficiency.

He said: **“Our clients’ faces with smiles on them.”**

That may be the clearest proof of all.

Good marketing doesn’t just say a product works. It shows where, how, and why it works.

About the Writer

Paula Conner writes contractor success stories, case studies and sales-support content for water feature, irrigation, and landscape product brands. After more than 30 years as co-owner and marketing lead of Scott Conner Landscape, she knows how to listen for the field story behind the product claim—and turn it into proof that sales teams can use.

paulaconner.com