

Center for Grassland Studies Alumni Update

Brandon Peterson, District Conservationist Natural Resources Conservation Service

Brandon Peterson grew up on a modest acreage just outside of Thedford, a small Nebraska town and ranching community. He spent many days assisting local ranchers, including a summer he helped with haying. Most of Peterson's family is invested in their own agricultural operations, so he is no stranger to agriculture or working hard.

Peterson decided to pursue a degree in Animal Science at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL), and added the Grazing Livestock Systems (GLS) degree program to his studies between his junior and senior year. “The extra class time was well worth the delay in my graduation,” indicates Peterson. Later, while looking for a summer job between his sophomore and junior year of college, Brandon's uncle suggested he speak with a district conservationist at the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Thedford. The subsequent meeting in 1997 began what would prove to be a long and successful career with NRCS for Brandon.



Peterson's work with the NRCS has taken him from a summer intern to soil conservation aid to range management specialist to resource conservationist. In September 2016, Brandon was selected to be the district conservationist in the O'Neill Field Office, which serves the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resource District (UENRD) area. Within this role, Brandon oversees the employees, programs and activities that encompass the UENRD area, including the counties of Antelope, Holt, Keya Paha, Brown and Rock.

The most engaging part of his job is helping producers conserve Nebraska's natural resources. “I love being able to meet with producers to understand their issues and help find solutions that will work for them, while also conserving and improving the state's natural resources,” Peterson explains.

Looking back on his studies at UNL, Brandon finds he uses every aspect of what he was taught, whether calculating animal unit months or evaluating economical practices to implement on producers' land to achieve their objectives. All the knowledge and experience gained at UNL comes into play in one form or another. “I think the thing that I found most valuable is how the GLS degree program tied together everything that I use daily,” Brandon says.

Brandon, a former Nebraska Army National Guard member (1994—2006), lives in O'Neill with his wife and their three children.