

# Natural Resources Conservation Service Pathways Program

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## Background

- I worked in Rapid City, South Dakota as a soil science student trainee.
- I found this internship by looking through USAjobs.gov
- This program allows you to transition to a full-time position after graduation

### Mission Statement:

We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.

### About:

NRCS is a federal agency under USDA. They facilitate programs that incentivize farmers and ranchers to do conservation agricultural practices such as cover crops, rotational grazing, and filter strips. There is typically an office in every county throughout the country.



Lookout point in the Black Hills

## On the Job

### Soil Site Investigations

Most of my time was spent doing soil site investigations. I went out with a resource soil scientist to look at various sites and used our soil expertise to make decisions such as, determine if an engineering practice could be used, what cover crops to use, or what species of trees to plant in a windbreak.



Soil core used to aid in decision making



We used topography to determine where the well and pipeline system should be placed.

### Engineering

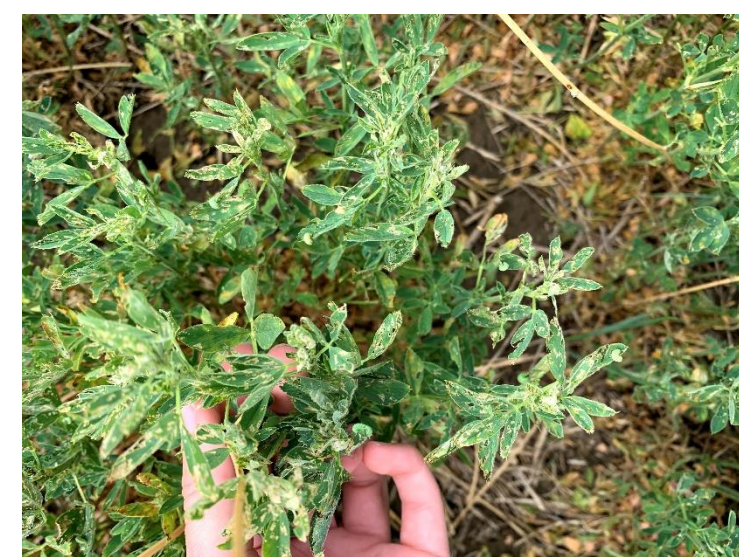
I worked with the engineers quite a bit. I used a Trimble GPS system to survey potential construction sites such as dams, stream crossings, and evaporation ponds. I designed a solar pump system and steel fabricated windbreaks according to NRCS specifications.



A completed set of stream barbs that I staked out.

### Agronomy Practices

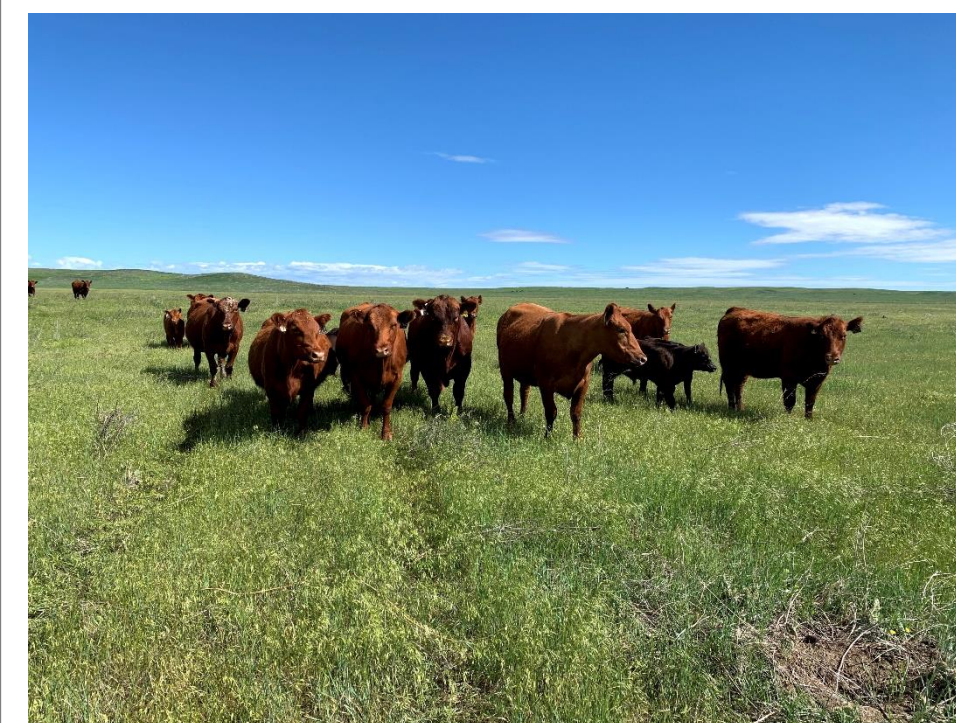
I went out a few times with the agronomist to check on different grass plantings, pollinator plot establishments, and to troubleshoot different problems with crops.



Alfalfa plant that had weevil issues

## Reflection

- I was able to put the knowledge I learned in classrooms into real life situations.
- I gained valuable skills and knowledge that I will be able to carry with me to my career.
- I loved the variety that this internship gave me and that we were outside in the field work most of the time.
- It was great to learn about different agricultural production systems compared to local, Ohio systems



Herd of Red Angus cattle at a producer's ranch



Black Hills National Forest

## Recommendations

- Start looking at usajobs.gov early and often as applications are only open for a week
- Take an internship out of state to have different experiences
- The pathways program is great because you get a job out of college
- Apply to multiple locations as it is competitive.



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