



In February 2026, the Society for Range Management (SRM) honored Dr. Ann Waters-Bayer, Dr. Maryam Niamir-Fuller, and Dr. Barbara Hutchinson with the Frederic G. Renner Award at SRM's 79th Annual Meeting in Monterey, California. Here are their acceptance speeches:

Dr. Ann Waters-Bayer



To all of you attending the SRM annual meeting in Monterey, warm greetings from me in Göttingen in central Germany. I'm very sorry that, for health reasons, I can't be with you to accept this award in person, together with Barbara and Maryam. It's great that both could travel to Monterey for the Awards Ceremony.

It's truly an honour to receive the Frederick G. Renner Award together with Barbara and Maryam. But it is a pity that Jim O'Rourke is no longer with us, as he was the initial driving force behind the campaign for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP).

Thanks to the Internet, the four of us worked very closely together although we were geographically quite far apart, meeting only at global events like the International Rangeland Congress (IRC). It was back in 2008, during the IRC in Hohhot in Inner Mongolia, that Jim, Maryam and I – and Jon Davies and my husband Wolfgang – discussed how to draw worldwide attention to the importance of rangelands and the people of the rangelands. And now, almost two decades later, the International Year has become a reality. We had originally been aiming for the year 2020 but were obviously somewhat too optimistic....

The SRM's Renner Award recognises not only our small team that struggled for many years to build up an international group of individuals and organisations in support of the IYRP and to gain buy-in from as many countries as possible for the resolution submitted by the Government of Mongolia to the United Nations. I accept this Award with the conviction that it gives recognition also to everyone in the International Support Group – now known as the Global Alliance for Rangelands & Pastoralists (GA4RP) – and especially those in the Global Secretariat, coordinated now by Igshaan, Burmaa and Enrique, and in the thematic Working Groups, coordinated by Jon, all of whom worked long and hard to get the IYRP declared by the United Nations and to prepare for the Year.

And my personal thanks go to Lauren for taking over many of my tasks in the Global Secretariat – and doing a much better job of it than I could have done.

I sincerely hope that the surge of interest in rangelands and pastoralists worldwide from very local to global level, which was evident already in January, the first month of the IYRP, will become even stronger

as the Year advances and will continue long after 2026, so that the rangelands and their stewards – the pastoralists – will be given well-deserved and vital attention at all levels of policymaking.

Many thanks to the SRM for its outstanding support to the IYRP – and for this award in honour of the IYRP.

Dr. Maryam Niamir-Fuller



Thank you, I am deeply touched, because you are also recognizing the entire IYRP team not just us three – including our dear friend, Jim O'Rourke. When we first started to test the waters for IYRP, back in 2016, we thought 2019 would be our year. How ambitious we were! But it was this ambition that helped us grow the movement to where we are today. And through it all, SRM has kept pace with us – providing political and moral support, and when needed, even some resources.

On a more personal note, I became a member of SRM in 1981, while working on my PhD at the University of Arizona with Phil Ogden as my advisor. This was after working a year and half in Abyei, Sudan on a USAID funded Integrated Rural Development project among the Dinka pastoralists. Our project closed because of increasing insecurity and conflict in that area. University of Arizona gave me, as an international student, the opportunity to enhance my experience working with pastoralists, combining it with range and soil science.

45 years later, I would like to reach out to the International Students in the audience and encourage them to see SRM as a doorway not just to greater knowledge and contacts, but as a professional home to come back to.

I would also like to encourage SRM to keep the vision of this Annual Meeting alive – from now on, can we have a “herd around the world” session at every Annual meeting?

It is an amazing feeling to be recognized by one's peers, and I truly thank you for the honour.

Dr. Barbara Hutchinson



Good afternoon. For me more than most, there are many people to thank for this award as it is truly a culmination of thirty years of my learning from an amazing group of talented professionals. So, I hope you will indulge me as I do a little reminiscing. In 1995, a grant from the General Services Administration to the University of Arizona Library began a project to bring agriculture-related information to a nascent WWW. Through the willingness of people like George Ruyle and Mitch McClaran to collaborate with a bunch of librarians and technology specialists, our first website "Arizona Rangelands" was created. Then, in 2000, with the help of our College of Agriculture & Life Sciences and Library Deans and many others in the Western &

Central Plains land-grant universities, this effort expanded into what is now the Rangelands Partnership and the web-based Rangelands Gateway. Through these years, I learned so much about rangelands and the people who care for them from people like the Karens (Launchbaugh and Hickman), Mark Thorne, Mel George, Amber Dalke, and so so many more. I am forever grateful for their collaboration and their friendship.

Then, in 2015, members of the Partnership began discussing the idea for an International Year of Rangelands. The incoming SRM president at the time was Larry Howery and he took the idea to the SRM Board. Their enthusiasm and support started the ball officially rolling although we had no idea at the time that this would be a 10-year effort. Through Jim O'Rourke's leadership as chair of the International Affairs Committee and in the International Rangelands Congress, we learned that the "pastoralist" community also was hoping to gain an International Year. Bringing these two worlds together made all the difference. Nevertheless, despite an incredibly strong grassroots initiative, it still took seven years to finally have our resolution for an IYRP voted on by the UN General Assembly. I wish I could name and thank all the remarkable people and organizations who have volunteered countless hours to make the IYRP happen...particularly the leadership of the Mongolian Government, but also these two extraordinary women who are sharing this award with me. I am more than humbled to be included with them. They are extremely knowledgeable, absolutely inspiring, and have been able to bring this truly global effort to levels of success and engagement that I think many of us thought would not be possible. Thank you, Ann and Maryam, for sharing your expertise with me and for your leadership in the Global Alliance.

Finally, I want to thank the entire Society for Range Management for giving this prestigious award to us. It is an honor I know we all appreciate beyond words. Your support for the IYRP from the very start was instrumental in gaining this International Year - and, yes, because of your good work, the United States actually voted in favor of the designation which has not always been the case with past international years.

And truly lastly, I want to end with a thank you to all of my family for their love, support, patience, understanding, and encouragement through the years. You are the best!