

**REMARKS OF V.C. PATEL, IIHR DIRECTOR  
MRERS GROUNDBREAKING, 10 MAY 2001**

On behalf of IIHR, I thank you all for coming to this celebration. And special thanks to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for its hospitality, its support, and its openness to the prospect of IIHR becoming its neighbor and partner in research on this historic site. We feel especially welcomed because of the wonderful representation of IDNR personnel here today.

Though we have never had a laboratory along the river, IIHR is at home on the Mississippi. For many years, our institute has been an international leader in diverse areas of fluid flow, including various aspects of flow in rivers. For over seven decades, IIHR research projects have brought staff—time and again—to the Mississippi River for study. There are few organizations that have impacted knowledge on such a wide range of river-flow phenomena as IIHR. We've studied sedimentation, bank erosion, ice phenomena and effects, design and operation of lock and dam structures, floods, marine biology, chemical transport, thermal pollution, and on and on. And other institutions and entities have studied with equal intensity phenomena of their interest and concern. Yet in all we know and have learned—in all of the collective contributions of all of the world's researchers and practitioners—we only have begun to understand interactive river processes.

In 1995, the Rock Island District Corps of Engineers sponsored a study to assess the extent of bank erosion in the Upper Mississippi River. Because of his extensive experience and knowledge of the river, Dr. Tatsuaki Nakato of the IIHR staff was invited to participate in this survey. Despite his expertise, in the five weeks he spent on the river, he was humbled and overwhelmed by nature's work. In the long days of work during those weeks, Tatsuaki began to dream of establishing a laboratory along the river where long-term monitoring could take place and where scientists from different fields could come together to study and to exchange their knowledge. That dream is about to be realized starting today.

The time is right for a research and educational facility that will take a holistic and cooperative approach to the study of rivers. Our presence here is evidence that people share in the dream of a healthy river. People understand that the well being of rivers—especially one as vital to our nation's interests as the Mississippi—is bigger and of more overall importance than the concerns or needs of any one agency or constituency. Every agency and entity we have approached with this idea has enthusiastically endorsed it. We have communicated plans for this facility to many researchers, both in the U.S. and abroad, from diverse disciplines, and the response has been one of overwhelming excitement and eagerness to participate. The time is right.

IIHR's vision for the Mississippi Riverside Environmental Research Station is that it stimulate multidisciplinary study and understanding of the long-term impact of natural events and human activities on the river ecosystem, and share that knowledge with the public. With consideration given to all uses of it, people who come together here will evaluate and plan strategies to protect this river—one of the nation's most important natural resource—and pass on that knowledge to benefit other rivers.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the continuing support of the University of Iowa administration for IIHR programs, including this project. President Mary Sue Coleman made major changes in her schedule to be with us today, and for this and other actions on our behalf, I thank her.