Panel to work on environmental law

A blue-ribbon committee to consider draft environmental legislation for local and state government has been named, according to John W. deGravelles, chairman of the Mayor's Council for Environmental Quality.

Ed Walters will be chairman of the 11-member committee of scientists, engineers, university professors, lawyers, citizens and legislators.

The purpose of the committee is to initiate action to improve air quality in Baton Rouge, deGravelles said in a prepared release.

The committee will consider a broad range of possible legislation, including daily, year-round monitoring of specific chemicals emitted into Baton Rouge air by local industry, deGravelles said.

Monitoring currently performed by the state is not conducted on weekends or holidays and measures only certain general categories of chemical pollutants, such as ozone, he added.

"Right to know" legislation suggested by the mayor earlier this week also will be considered, the attorney said. Such legislation would require chemical companies to divulge to the public the exact nature and makeup of the chemicals they emit.

The committee plans to meet within two weeks, deGravelles said.

Members of the committee are Sen. Tommy Hudson, D-Baton Rouge; Dan Jackson, professor and director of Environmental Studies at LSU; Paul Templet, associate professor of Environmental Studies at LSU; Wilbur Clark, chairman of the Southern University Chemistry Department; Arnold Smally, chemistry professor at Southern with extensive environmental experience; Don Houde, environmental engineer with Uniroyal Chemical; Ken Murchison, professor of environmental law at the LSU Law School; Pinkie C. Wilkerson, professor of environmental law at the Southern Law School; John Sheppard, environmental attorney with the Louisiana Attorney General's Office; and Mary Lee Orr, president of Mothers Against Air Pollution.