DISCUSS ATCHAFALAYA PROJECT—Ben Skerret (right) and Dr. Al Beachem (center), recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., are shown chatting with USL Professor Dr. Vernon Behrhorst prior to a Chamber of Commerce meeting Friday. Skerret and Beachem made the trip to seek help from the Department of Interior and the Louisiana congressional delegation for the Atchafalaya Basin project.

Atchafalaya Basin Gets Assurance On Preserves

The Greater Atchafalaya Basin Council has received a promise from the Department of Interior to take the initiative with Louisiana's Department of Wild Life and Fisheries in preserving lakes and bayous in the basin.

Ben Skerret, president of the council, made the announcement to the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce in the War Memorial Building auditorium Friday.

Skerret and Dr. Al Beachem made a trip to Washington recently to seek the aid of the Department of Interior officials and the Louisiana delegation.

The response from both groups was encouraging, Skerret said. "This is the first time we have gotten such definite and concrete backing from the congressmen," he said.

When their report of the Atchafalaya Basin situation was presented to Senator Allen Ellender, the senator was quoted as saying, "I'm sorry to hear of the conditions because I had taken steps some time back to save these lakes."

According to Skerret, however, the hydraulic dredges pump mud from the bottom of the river onto the bank and the run-off from the levees, containing finely sifted particles of clay, drain through the woods and into the surrounding lakes and bayous.

The particles stay in suspension indefinitely causing the water to be muddy. When they do finally settle Skerret said, they form a mud bottom not conducive to healthy water life.

The Atchafalaya Basin Council is proposing the construction of small retaining dikes to retain the spoil during the dredging operation and cause the runoff to be diverted back into the main channel of the river.

Skerret urged everyone attended the meeting to write to his congressman in support of any efforts made to save lakes and bayous in the basin. Beacham said "If anything is going to be done, it will have to be done with political backing."

The men said they sold the congressmen on the basin plan with the fact that it had public support.