Tribes turn up the heat on hot-springs change

"The site has been desecrated," says Yonge.

At the Navy's request after the tribes' initial protest last year, California Energy paid a consultant to look at the problem to determine if the reinjection of geothermal fluids from the Coso plants could account for the changes at the springs.

The conclusion: it could not.

Unsatisfied, the tribes asked for a review by two geothermal scientists who found the consultant's report "substandard," said Yonge.

Now she's asking the Navy to kick in $50,000 so the council can commission its own study.

If a second study finds the Coso project at fault, "we fully expect that the Navy will enforce its contract with California Energy Co. to implement a mitigation plan to lessen, if not eliminate, the destruction and desecration of Coso Hot Springs," says Yonge. "The heritage of all Americans is at stake here."

California Energy officials say the Coso Hot Springs are most likely undergoing natural changes typical of centuries-long cycles of geothermal activity.

— Jim Borg