

No one knows who sent out copies of the confidential report.

But Thomas Gamble, executive director of the Office of Children and Youth, said his agency is not responsible. "I can flatly deny that those letters were mailed by the Office of Children and Youth," he said Tuesday.

are investigating allegations of sexual abuse or serious bodily injury, and it must release them to a judge under court order, he said.

Also, Children's Services must provide copies of a report to the parties involved. That includes the alleged perpetrator, because that person has a right to see government

Gamble stressed that the names of people who make anonymous referrals to his office when they suspect child abuse are never revealed.

"Even in those cases when we have to release information, the anonymous referral source is always removed before it leaves our office. So a referral source would not

The agency's envelopes carry the county's seal, not a rubber stamp.

Part of the information in the report was whited out, including the victim's name and the names of the victim's parents. The name of the alleged male abuser and the nature of the allegations were not whited out.

Millcreek Police Chief William

Eight-year-old wetlands case

Waterford farmer to continue court fight

By **BILL McKINNEY**
Morning News staff reporter

Waterford farmer Robert Brace will take the wetlands case he has fought with government officials for eight years to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Brace says what is at stake is every citizen's right to own and work their own land.

The case is one that began in the 1940s when government workers seeded the area around the Brace family farm with beavers.

The beavers built dams in ditches that were used by three generations of Braces to drain their farm, to make it suitable for raising crops. The beaver dams, Brace said, created wetlands on a small part of his 137 acres.

State and federal government officials claim about 30 acres of the Brace farm are wetlands, although a federal judge's ruling, now overturned, estimated the true amount at no

more than 25 percent of the government's claim.

Brace claims his ditch-clearing turned nasty in the mid-1980s, as he was continuing drainage work begun in the 1970s. He said he ran into opposition by a Pennsylvania Game Commission officer who judged the property to be a wetlands sanctuary.

Even though Game Commission officers years earlier helped remove beavers from the land, Brace said, and even though various agencies previously allowed him to clear his ditches and drain lines, he found himself in 1986 faced with accusations by four agencies that he was a wetlands violator.

"Two years before that, in 1984, when there was all sorts of flooding in the county, the government paid me to clean out the ditches to help prevent flooding," Brace said, shaking his head.

The agencies ordered Brace to restore his property to wetlands condition and set a schedule of fines that

mounted, potentially, into the millions of dollars over a period of time.

Brace fought back. He thought he had won in late 1993 when U.S. District Judge Glenn Mencer, after personally inspecting the farm property, ruled against the government.

Brace said government lawyers waited until the last day of a court-imposed deadline to appeal Mencer's decision. The government won a reversal at the federal appeals court level.

That appeals court has now upheld its decision and tossed the case back to the U.S. District Court in Erie for enforcement.

"My last hope for justice is the U.S. Supreme Court," Brace said. "We're asking the Supreme Court to hear our case and reverse the appeals court."

The case is being watched closely by organizations as varied as pulpwood companies, farm groups, real estate development organizations, and environmental groups.

If the Supreme Court refuses to hear the case or if Brace loses, he will be forced to restore the farm land to wetlands and pay any civil penalties set, which he said can, theoretically at least, still be measured in the millions of dollars.

Only after those actions are taken will he be allowed to apply to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a permit to drain the wetlands and convert it back to farm land.

The violation must be corrected first because the government does not process permit applications for any applicant it considers "in violation."

Brace expects, after all of this, that his application would be rejected.

Only at that point, he said, will he be able to apply for reimbursement from the government to cover a "taking" of his land.

"As far as I'm concerned, the government and its bureaucrats have ruined my life," Brace said.

USAir, airport officials to discuss Erie service

By **BILL McKINNEY**
Morning News staff reporter

USAir representatives will meet sometime in February with top officers and authority members of the Erie International Airport.

Airport Director Robert August said the meeting will be with USAir's

Fairview teachers mull latest school board offer

By **SCOTT WESTCOTT**
Morning News staff reporter

No settlement was reached, but Fairview teachers plan to study a school board contract offer presented during a two-hour negotiating

The five-year offer contains 3.5 percent annual pay raises in exchange for the teachers changing to the Manufacturer's Association health plan and the elimination of post-retirement benefits (not pensions) granted in the current con-