

October 15, 2025

CITY OF FAIRBANK  
116 EAST MAIN STREET  
FAIRBANK IA 50629

EMAIL ONLY [fairbankpw@fairbank-ia.org](mailto:fairbankpw@fairbank-ia.org)

Subject: Fairbank Yard Waste Composting Facility

Enclosed is the report of the recent visit to the above facility. We believe you will find the report self-explanatory and strongly encourage you to take action on the requirements and recommendations listed at the end of the report.

Some requirements are noted at the end of the report. Please note that a written response is required by November 26, 2025, outlining how the requirements noted at the end of this report will be addressed.

If you have any comments or questions about the inspection or report, please contact me at 563-920-2695 or [amber.sauser@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:amber.sauser@dnr.iowa.gov).

Sincerely,

**Amber Sauser**

Digitally signed by Amber Sauser  
Date: 2025.10.15 15:39:49 -05'00'

Environmental Specialist Senior, FIELD OFFICE #1

Enclosure(s):

c: Solid Waste Section  
Efile: 10 SW Fairbank Compost ins 100725 als

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**  
**Yard Waste Compost Facility Visit**

**Permit # 10-COM-02-22**

**Site Name: City of Fairbank Yard Waste Site**

**Person Present: Nick Kuker, Public Works Director      Date This Visit: 10/7/2025**

**Location: Entrance at the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> St South and Grove Street**

Yes – compliance was being achieved; No – compliance was not being achieved,  
N/A – not applicable or not observed

**Observations:**

Yes	No	N/A	Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Adequate signage present
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Stormwater run-on/run-off
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Ponding minimized/addressed within 48 hours
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Evidence of open dumping/burning
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5. Fenced area (if the site also conducts tree/tree trimmings burning) (fence is provided)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Separation distances maintained (for composting operation)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Materials managed to minimize odors, noise, dust, litter, and vectors
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Composting occurs on an all-weather surface
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Facility is registered with the DNR and submits annual reports

**Observations and Discussion**

On October 7, 2025, I visited the Fairbank Yard Waste site. Mr. Kuker, Public Works Director met me on site.

**Site Access and Security:** The facility is located approximately 500 feet southwest of the entrance. There is a lockable gate. However, the gate is left unlocked but secured with a chain during the day. Multiple cameras are on site to address illegal dumping and similar. This has reportedly been successful in addressing open dumping at this location. Previously, the gate was always locked, and residents had to get a key from the city hall.

**Signage:** Three signs are located on the front gate. One indicates that the property is protected by video surveillance, another that yard waste only is accepted and a third reiterates yard waste, grass and leaves are accepted and sticks (under 4" round and 6" length). The third sign is also present near the compost pile. The requirements for signage are outlined in 567 IAC 105.4(2) and include the following:

- Name of operation.
- Operating hours.
- Materials which are accepted or the statement "All materials must have prior approval."
- Telephone number for 24-hour emergency contact person.

Signage should be updated to include all required information. This includes trees/ tree trimmings, as the signs appear to indicate that only small sticks are allowed.

There was no signage indicating where trees/tree trimmings versus yard waste should be deposited. Although proper segregation appeared to be occurring, signage is recommended to clearly indicate where materials should be deposited.

**Site Maintenance:** Mr. Kuker noted that staff will move materials placed in the incorrect pile. In addition, it was noted that there is a finished compost pile and an active pile. All piles appeared well maintained. Residents have access to the finished compost. Again, additional signage is recommended to identify the piles.

A city staff person routinely mixes the yard waste pile with a front end loader to aid in composting.

Some low spots were observed, but no ponding was present. This area had received rain the prior day. The facility is reminded to address any ponding that may occur within 48 hours. Mr. Kuker noted that they can fill low spots when they have extra gravel or similar.

There is a gravel drive from the gated entrance to the composting operation which appears to provide adequate access during periods of inclement weather.

**Trees/ Tree Trimmings:** Open burning at this location has not occurred for a few years. A contractor is reportedly called when there are adequate tree trimmings to haul the material to the Black Hawk County Landfill. It was recommended to maintain landfill receipts to verify proper handling of this material. I requested that Mr. Kuker verify that all trees and tree trimmings were being hauled to the landfill.

**Setback Requirements:** The compost operation is required to be at least 500 feet from an inhabited residence. The general area of the composting operation is within 500 feet of a few residences. However, the actual composting appears to be greater than 500' from residences. It is strongly recommended that waivers be obtained in the event that any portion of the composting is done closer than 500' to a residence.

You are reminded to ensure composting activities are at least 100' from the river. On the day of this visit, it appeared that the separation distance was being maintained.

It was also noted that the site is located in the floodplain. Ensure that this issue has been addressed according to 567 IAC 71.5.

## CONCLUSION

### Requirements:

- Verify where the trees/ tree trimmings removed from the city are being taken.
- Obtain facility signage that includes all information as required in 567 IAC 105.4(2).



Provide a written response by **November 25, 2025**, via email to [amber.sauser@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:amber.sauser@dnr.iowa.gov) addressing each of the above.

### Recommendations:

- Obtain additional signage indicating where materials should be deposited.
- Obtain written waivers from residences near the 500' separation distance to ensure this requirement is met in the event the composting operation is moved further to the north/northeast.

### Reminder:

Ensure all required separation distances continue to be met, including 500' from inhabited residences and 100' from the river.

INSPECTOR	<div>Amber Sauser</div> <div> Digitally signed by Amber Sauser Date: 2025.10.15 15:40:14 -05'00'</div> <div>Environmental Specialist Senior</div>
REVIEWER	<div>Chris Gelner</div> <div> Digitally signed by Chris Gelner Date: 2025.10.16 06:02:33 -05'00'</div> <div>Environmental Specialist Senior</div>

**105.4(2)** The facility shall have a permanent sign posted at the entrance specifying:

- a.* Name of operation.
- b.* Operating hours.
- c.* Materials which are accepted or the statement "All materials must have prior approval."
- d.* Telephone number of 24-hour emergency contact person.