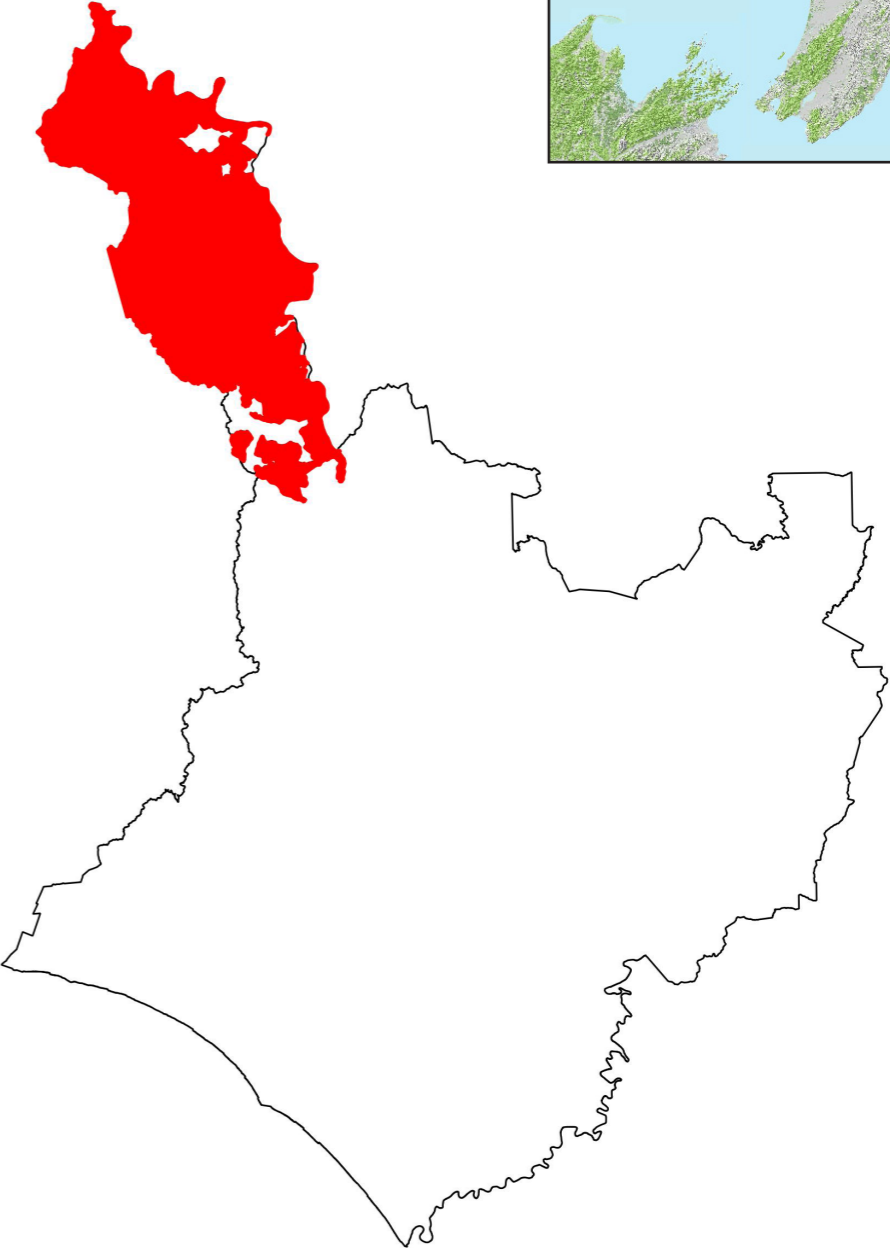
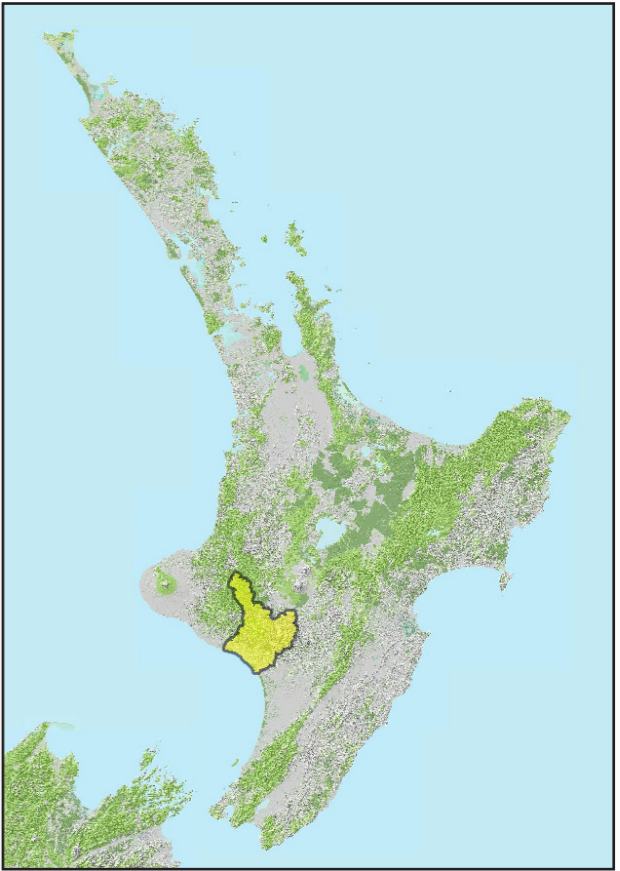
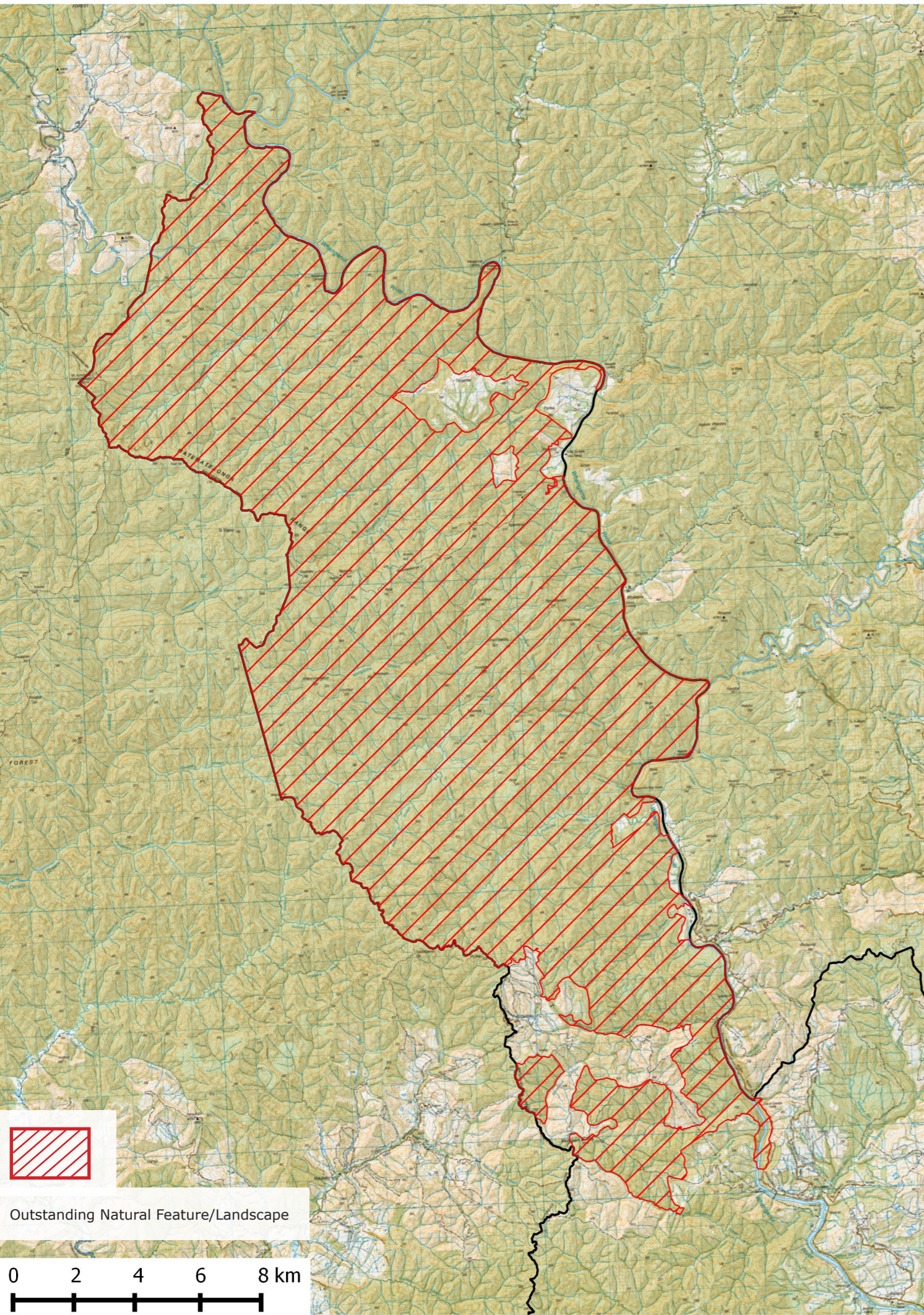
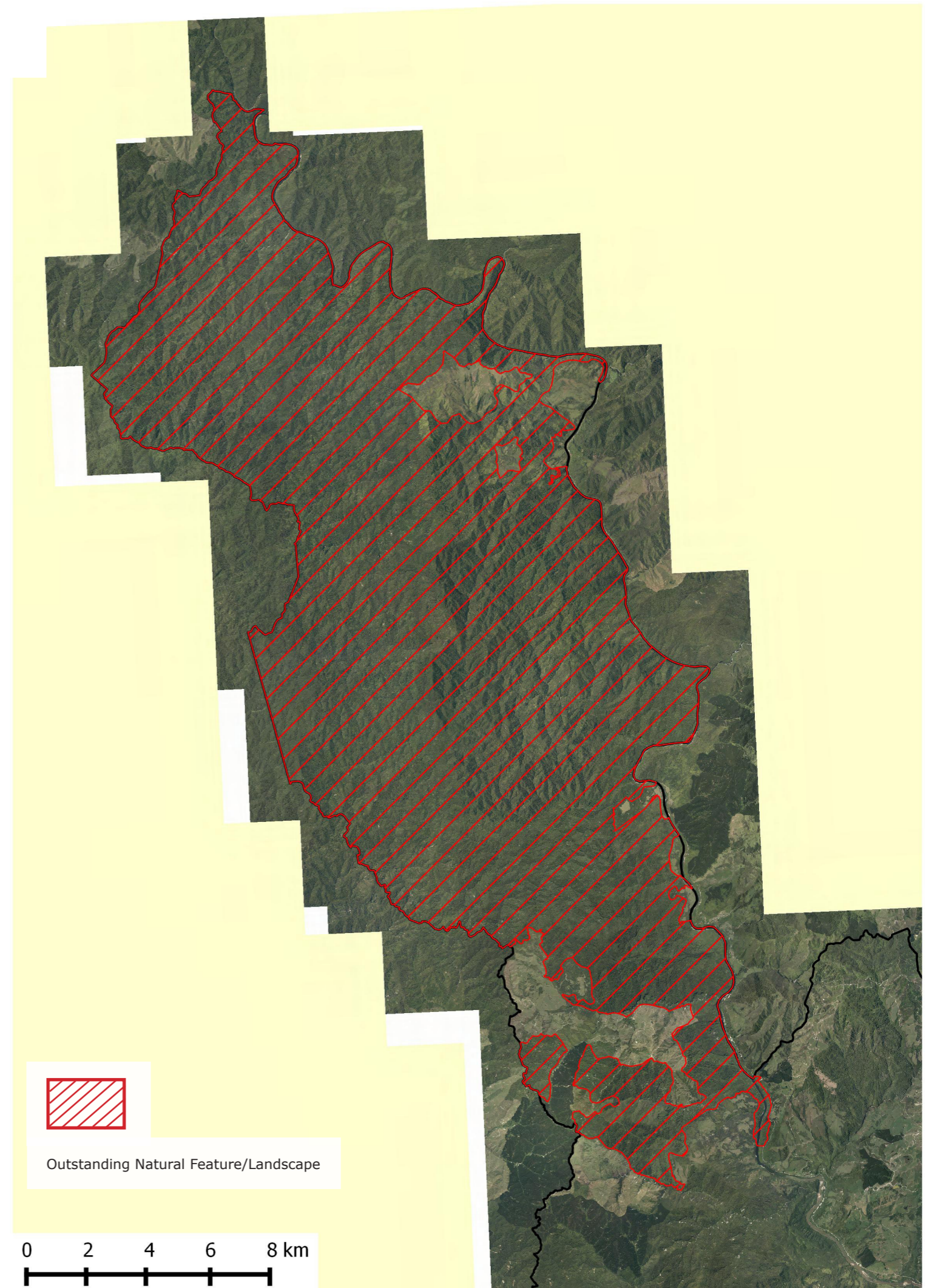
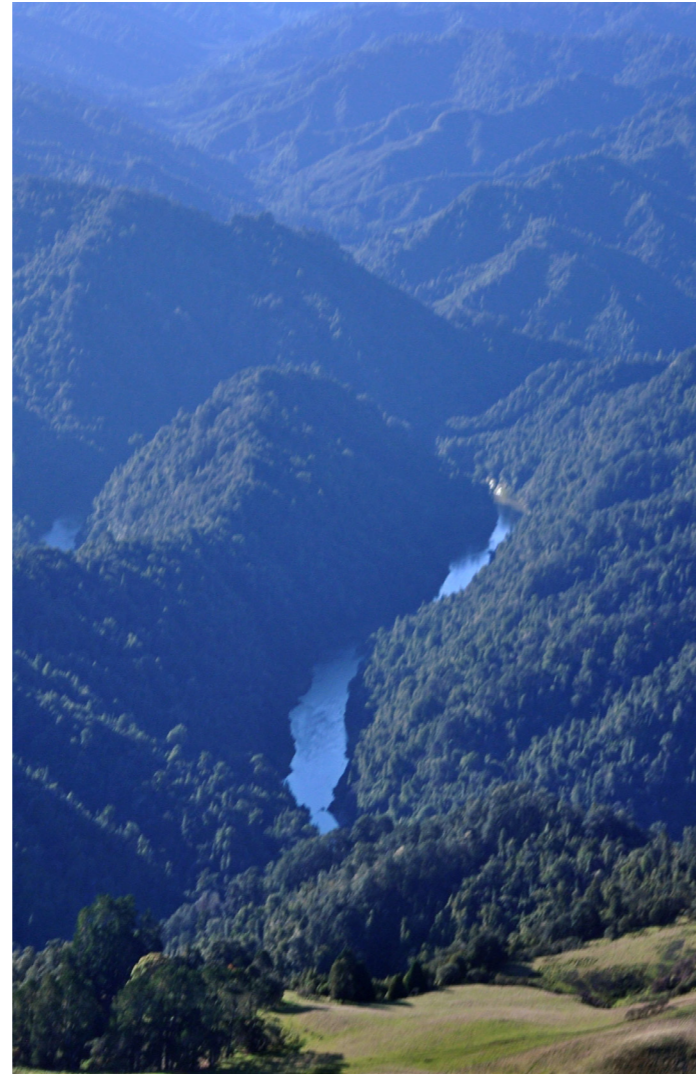


Whanganui River Gorge and Upper National Park





Name: Whanganui River Gorge and Upper National Park

Location: NZ Topo 50 - BK32 & BJ32

Description: The section of the Whanganui River from its confluence with Tangarakau River to Jerusalem and land westward from the river to the District Boundary. Deeply incised meandering river valley and gorges with exposed mudstone escarpments. Extensive steeply eroded hills covered in unmodified indigenous forest covering virtually the entire district northwest of Jerusalem.

ONL/ONF: Outstanding Natural Landscape

Natural Science	Geological/ Geomorphological	Deeply incised gorges created by erosion of the river through the sedimentary soils that formed the seabed and were uplifted and exposed following the last ice age. The soils comprise uplifted sedimentary mudstone and hard and soft sandstone with layers of volcanic ash and pumice that have been deposited following volcanic eruptions from the Taupō eruption 1850 years ago, and later from Taranaki and Tongariro. The erosive action of the river has resulted in entrenched meanders or steeply incised gorges with near vertical edges, exposed rock outcrops or mudstone bluffs. The sedimentary origins are evident through the soft sedimentary layers, while fossils can be exposed in the erosion process.
	Biological/ Ecological	Unmodified indigenous podocarp forest which enhances the ecological value and river quality while also creating a habitat for indigenous and exotic birdlife. Extensive tracts of primary lowland forest clothe the land surrounding river, extending the full width (approximately 12km) of the District from the Whanganui River in the east to the district boundary in the west.
	Hydrological	Water in the river and from stream tributaries has significant quality and quantity values, with recognition of the benefits that the indigenous land cover has on the rivers water quality. A water conservation order exists on a number of tributaries as a means of protecting water flow. Water of the Whanganui River has great spiritual value to iwi, flowing from the mountain (Ruapheu) to the sea and being recognised by iwi as their river Ko Whanganui te Awa (Our River is Whanganui).

Associational	Historical	Important travelling route since early settlement. Used by Maori for travel from the Taranaki coast through to the central plateau and Lake Taupo, a significant trading route. Used by European as a water highway for trade and tourism. In the late 1800's a fleet of 12 steam boats run by A Hatrick & Co plied the river between Whanganui and Taumaranui, providing transport of timber, produce and tourists.
	Tangata Whenua	The entire river has huge cultural significance to Maori, having provided a means of transport and living environment for hundreds of years. The status of the river is now recognised as Te Awa Tupua (an integrated, living whole) with an inextricable relationship between iwi with the river. Whanganui River is now given legal status and recognised as having a legal identity, just like a person when it comes to the law (in the same way a company is), which will give it rights and interests. The people say, 'Ko au te awa. Ko te awa ko au' (I am the river. The river is me). The Great River flows, From the Mountains to the Sea, I am the River, and the River is me.
	Shared/ Recognised	With an overall length of approximately 300 km, the Whanganui is the country's third-longest river and has the second highest discharge rate (behind the Waikato River) in the North Island. The Whanganui River is widely recognised by iwi for its cultural significance, and Europeans for its historic and recreational significance. Virtually the entire area within the upper reaches of the District are included within the Whanganui National Park which gives national recognition to its outstanding landscape values.
	Recreation	High level of recreational use, including hunting, tramping, jet boating, river cruises, fishing and over 6,000 people kayak the gorge parts of the river each year.

Perceptual	Memorability	Highly memorable landscape due to the scale and steepness of landform incision rising from the watercourse - more dramatic than surrounding folded landforms due to the presence of a significant escarpments along the waterway which contrasts with the surrounding sloping geology. The escarpments have a high degree of memorability and contribute to the identity and sense of place of the area. The Whanganui River flows in an almost unbroken narrow winding gorge in this section of the Park, giving outstanding examples of entrenched meanders. This landscape provides a sense of enclosure and intimacy, as well as isolation, for those travelling this section of the river and a sense of wilderness and isolation for those within the landscape to its west. The magnificent unmodified forest is awe inspiring in its scale and grandeur, with tall trees and diverse undergrowth covering the hills and valleys through the landscape west of the river.
	Legibility/ Expressiveness	A highly expressive incised meandering pattern resulting from the rivers erosive action through the soft sedimentary geology. Legibility is emphasised by the dramatic enclosure from the vertical escarpment faces lining the extensive gorges. The extensive topography of the bush covered land west of the river is characterised by its steep, V-sided valleys with sharp ridges of a fairly uniform height and a deeply entrenched dendritic (tree-like) drainage pattern.
	Transient	The river valley has its own microclimate, with the sheltered gorges characterised by heat in the summer, cold in the winter and heavy rains at any time of year. Mists frequently gather over the river and wider hills, giving meaning to the tangata whenua reference to 'people of the mist'. Extensive native birdlife and song, the sound of dripping water from hanging ferns and waterfalls, the roaring of rapids and streams in deep caverns through which tributaries pour and the silence of slow moving sections between rapids are all characteristics of this section of the river.
	Aesthetic	High aesthetic value within the river gorge due to its steep escarpments, cliffs and entrenched meanders within the river channel, provide a sense of enclosure, intimacy and isolation in the river section of this area. These are a dramatic and awe inspiring landscape features characterised by a repetition of vertical cliffs and meandering water that combine to provide a high level of coherence for this stretch of the Whanganui River before it transitions into the more open lands south of Jerusalem. The extensive hills west of the river have a maturity, continuity and intactness of the landscape, with the natural landscape expressing the underlying geology across large tracts of primary lowland forest. The natural landscape is predominant and the sense of remoteness and isolation is profound.
	Naturalness	Highly natural landscape with extensive areas of unmodified indigenous podocarp forest. Naturalness within the river corridor significantly contributed to by the dramatic escarpment features, scale of their erosion and the expressiveness of the rivers meandering course over time as shown by the deep gorges and vegetated cliffs. Naturalness of the extensive hills west of the river manifested by the pristine vegetation.

Summary of Key Values Very high landscape and visual values and natural character derived from the pristine vegetation and expressiveness of the formative processes of the Whanganui River course which cuts through the soft sedimentary sandstone and mudstone rock. The dynamic qualities demonstrated by the legibility of the gorges, the dramatic appearance of the enclosing vertical escarpments, the prominence and beauty of the mudstone cliffs, and the natural simplicity of the cliff edges and escarpments result in a highly memorable landscape feature. West of the river are the distinctive V-sided valleys that rhythmically flow across the landscape. Across the entire area, the vast coverage of unmodified indigenous podocarp forest stretching from the Whanganui River west to the District boundary. The National Park status of the vast majority of this area confirms its recognised values as an outstanding landscape.

Potential Threats Clearance or degradation of native vegetation throughout any part of the area. Loss of water through upstream take. Currently water is taken for hydro generation as part of the Tongariro Power Development. Further take for this purpose or perhaps irrigation could reduce water flow and have adverse cultural and perhaps ecological effects. Damming for hydroelectricity. Establishment of exotic weeds such as Gorse or Willow along the river edge. Adverse effects of military activities. Loss of indigenous flora and fauna by pest animals.

Potential Policies Maintain unmodified and regenerating indigenous vegetation along riparian edges and throughout the extensive area west of the Whanganui River. Control and remove exotic plants along the river margins. Control and remove pest animals. Maintain natural water flow and quality. Avoid clearance or loss of indigenous vegetation or introduction of exotic vegetation.