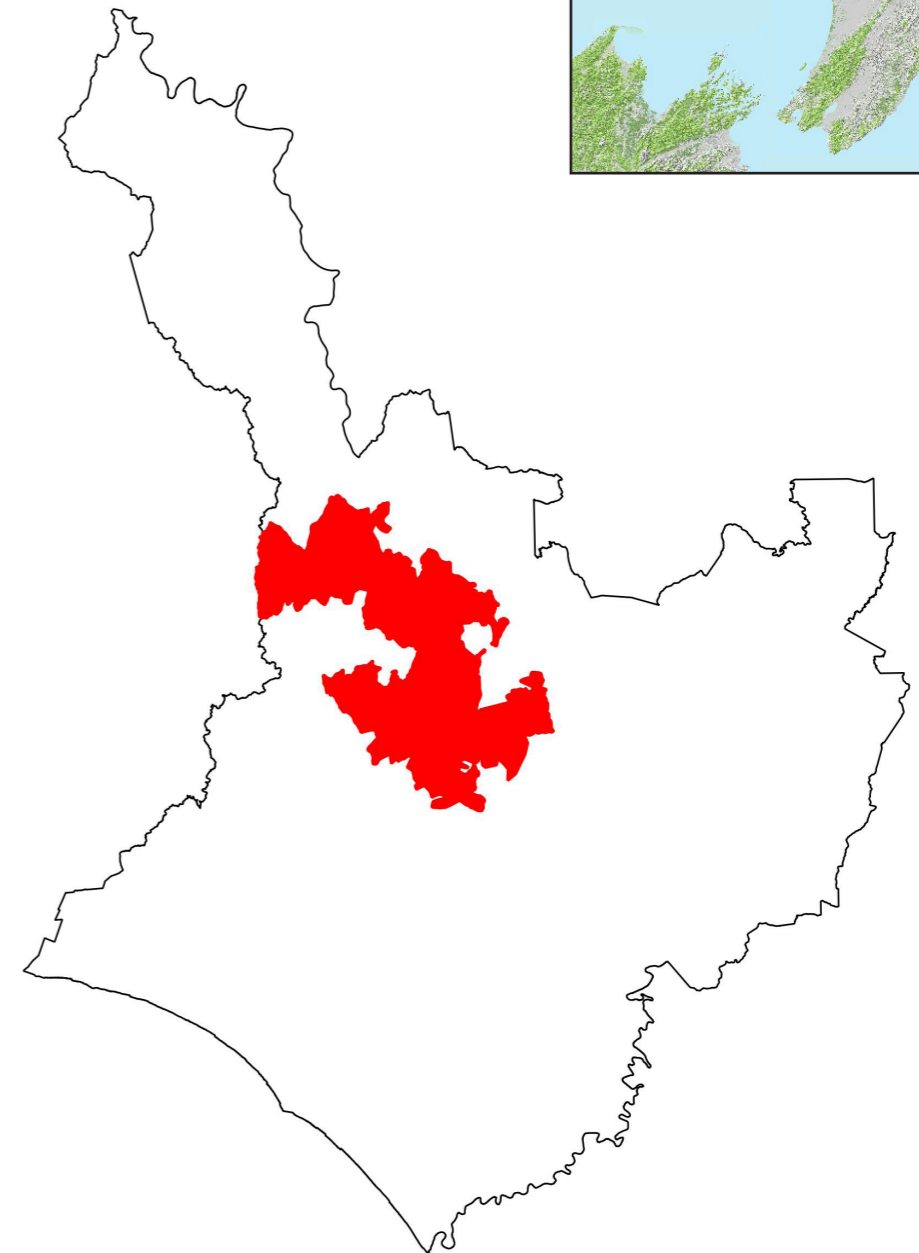
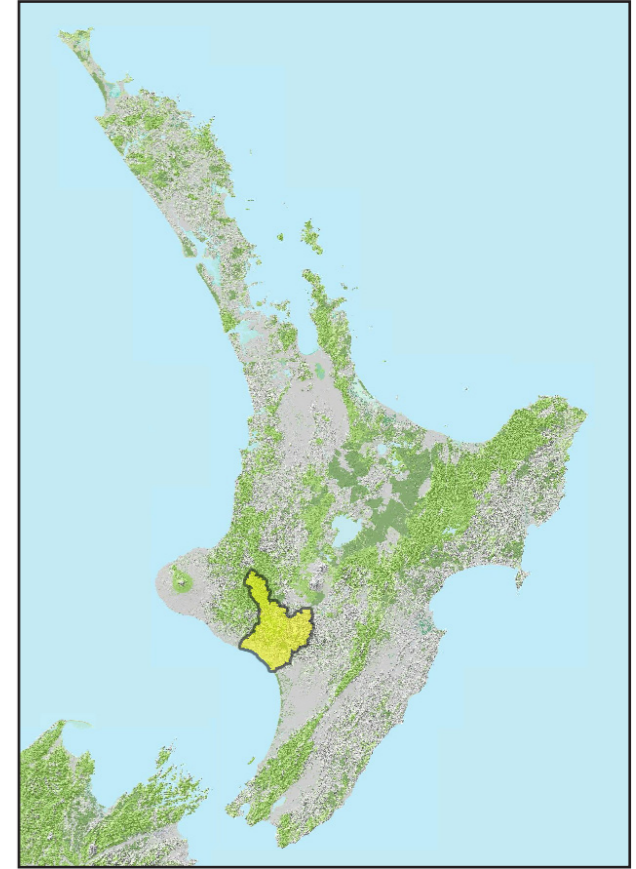
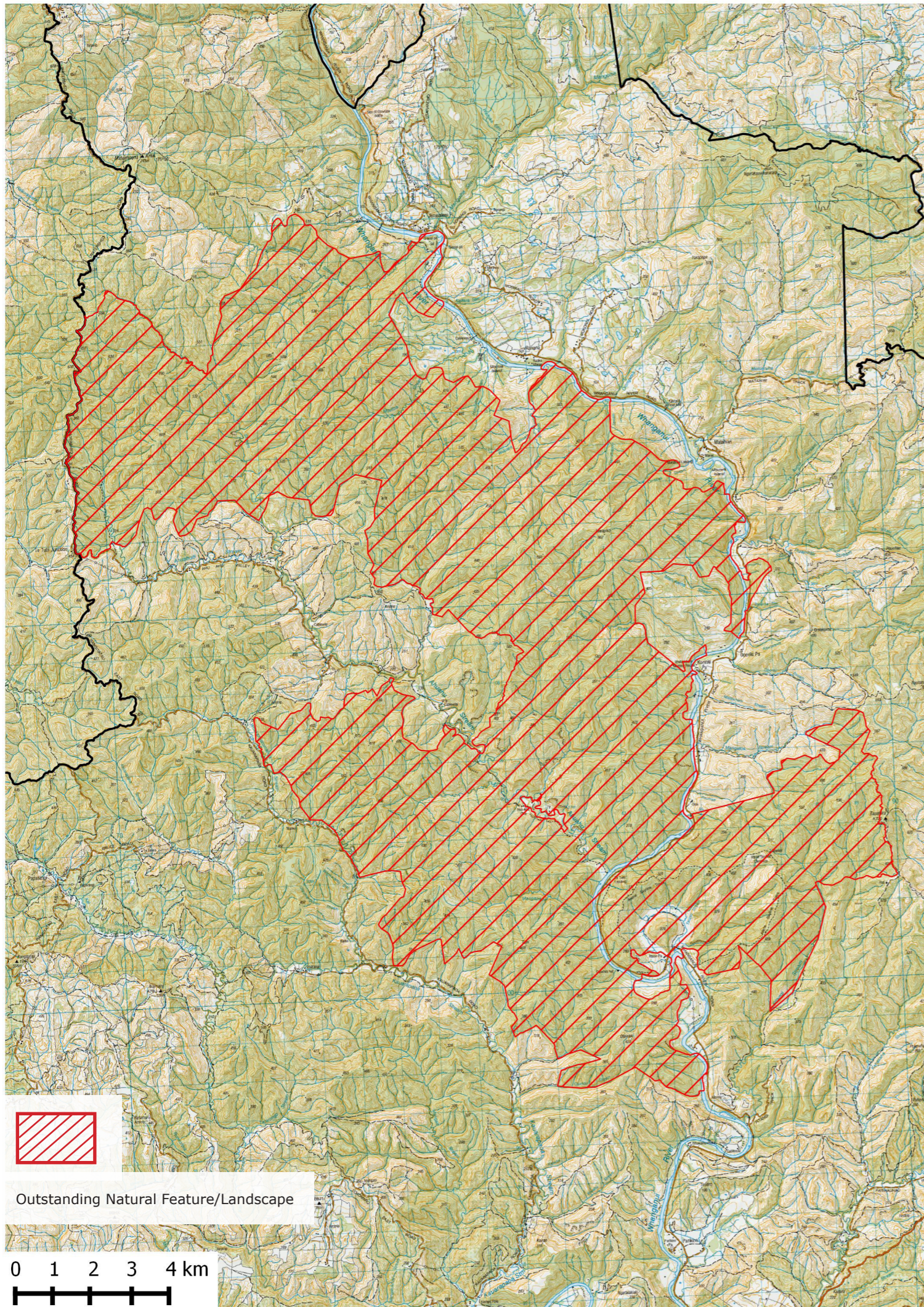
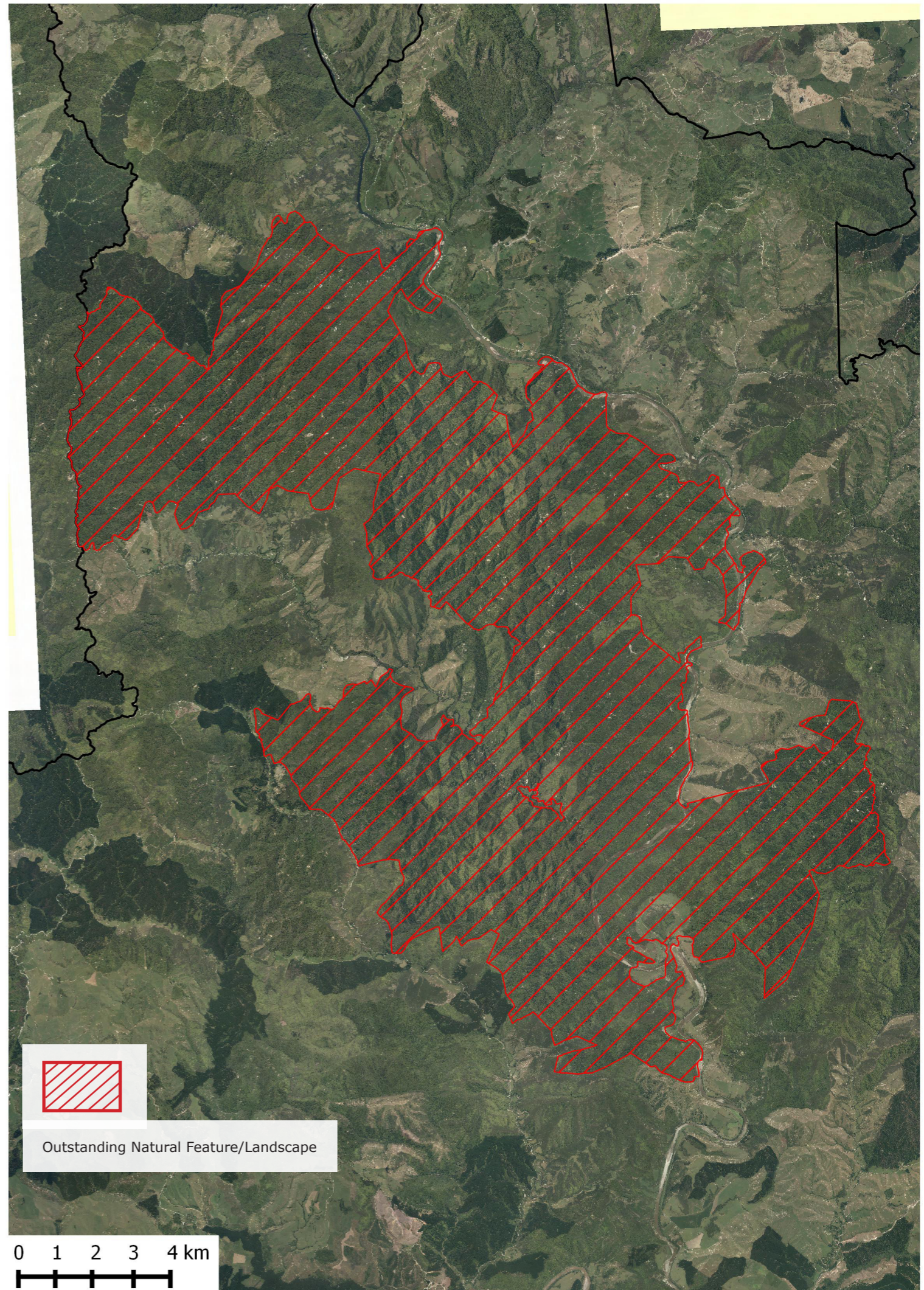


**Area 2  
Whanganui River and Lower National Park**









<b>Name:</b>	<b>Whanganui River and Lower National Park</b>
<b>Location:</b>	NZ Topo 50 – BK33 & BK32
<b>Description:</b>	Whanganui River from Jerusalem to Atene Pa and the landscape westward. Land to the west has areas clothed in unmodified Indigenous podocarp forest and regenerating indigenous vegetation. South of Pipiriki, steep gorges alternate with more open areas and wider terraces within this defined ONL area, before land cover becomes more modified beyond the southern end of the National Park.
<b>ONL/ONF:</b>	Outstanding Natural Landscape.

Natural Science	Geological/ Geomorphological	Uplifted sedimentary sandstone and mudstone form the underlying geology, with terraces of volcanic deposits dropped or washed downstream from eruptions over the last 2,000 years. Ingrown meanders define the river valley, with sloping sides having greater lateral erosion than the gorges upstream. Land to the west of the river is characterised by its steep, V-sided valleys with sharp ridges of a fairly uniform height and a deeply entrenched drainage pattern. Some exposed escarpments remain prominent due to their contrasting light colour and exposed rock due to the ongoing erosion of their soft base material. The southern part of this area includes the Atene “meander” or oxbow, where the Whanganui River once flowed in a near circle round the hill Puketapu and now has cut through to create a shortcut to the sea. This feature is recognised as one of the best examples in New Zealand, and is included in the Geological Society of New Zealand’s Geopreservation Inventory, an outstanding geological feature in the NZ Geological Society’s Index.
	Biological/ Ecological	Indigenous forest clothes the sloping riverside escarpments and the entire defined area west of the river. Much of this is unmodified podocarp forest and some is well developed native regeneration, both of which enhance the ecological values and water quality while also creating a habitat for indigenous and exotic birdlife. A small area of pastoral land is located in the old meander of the Atene oxbow. Maintenance as pasture and productive use of the pastoral land should be able to continue within this landscape character area as it does not detract from the landscape values associated with the Atene meander.
	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.

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 steamers run by A Hatrick & Co plied the river between Whanganui and Taumaranui, providing transport of timber, produce and tourists.  Numerous settlements, both Maori and European, were established along the banks of this section of the river. A number of settlements were named after European cities such as Atene (Athens), Koriniti (Corinth), Ranana (London), Jerusalem (Hiruhārama). Unlike many others, Jerusalem is more commonly known by its English name and is where Sister Suzanne Aubert founded her Order, the Sisters of Compassion, and was the home of notable poet James K Baxter.
	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. Throughout the river corridor are located numerous archaeological sites rising from Maori habitation.
	Shared/ Recognised	With an overall length of approximately 300 km, the Whanganui is the country’s third-longest river and (behind the Waikato River) has the second highest discharge rate in the North Island. The Whanganui River is widely recognised by iwi for its cultural significance, and Europeans for its historic and recreational significance. The Whanganui National Park covers an extensive part of this landscape character area, giving recognition to its outstanding landscape values.
	Recreation	High level of recreational use, including hunting, tramping, jet boating, river cruises, fishing and kayaking.

Perceptual	Memorability	Memorable landscape due to the scale and length of the incised and ingrown meandering that the river undertakes, plus the density and extent of indigenous vegetation that clothes the entire area. The sense of enclosure and intimacy plus a sense of grandeur combine to make this river section highly memorable. The vast tracts of indigenous vegetation covering the rhythmic geomorphology of the v shaped valleys to the west also contribute to the memorability of the area due to its extent, isolation and naturalness.
	Legibility/ Expressiveness	An expressive meandering pattern resulting from the rivers erosive action through the soft sedimentary geology. Legibility is emphasised by the broad enclosure from the sloping escarpment faces lining the extensive meanders. 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 drainage pattern.
	Transient	The river valley has its own microclimate, with the sheltered valleys characterised by heat in the summer, cold in the winter, mists and rain periods throughout the year. Extensive native birdlife and song, the dampness of dripping understorey and the sound are all characteristics of this section of the river and land to the west.
	Aesthetic	Extensive indigenous vegetation throughout the valley system has a high degree of coherence and reinforces its vividness both as a feature and in harmony with the natural meanders of the river. 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 and regenerating lowland forest. The natural landscape is predominant and the sense of naturalness is unavoidable.
Naturalness	Natural landscape with extensive areas of unmodified indigenous podocarp forest. Naturalness within the river corridor significantly contributed to by the scale of the escarpment features and the expressiveness of the rivers meandering course over time. Naturalness of the extensive hills west of the river significantly contributed to by the pristine and regenerating indigenous vegetation.	

Summary of Key Values	Very high landscape and visual values and natural character derived from the pristine and regenerating vegetation and expressiveness of the formative processes of the Whanganui River course which meanders through the soft sedimentary sandstone and mudstone rock. The dynamic qualities demonstrated by the legibility of the meanders, the memorable appearance of the enclosing escarpments, and the naturalness of the extensive indigenous vegetation cover that can be easily seen from the riverside road. West of the river, the distinctive V-sided valleys that rhythmically flow across the landscape. Across the entire area, the vast coverage of unmodified and regenerating indigenous podocarp forest stretching west from the Whanganui River. The National Park status of the majority of this area confirms its recognised values as an outstanding landscape.
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Potential Threats	Clearance or degradation of native vegetation throughout any part of the area. Flora and fauna damage through pests such as possums, rats and goats. Loss of water through hydro take off or irrigation. Damming for hydroelectricity. Establishment of exotic weeds such as Gorse or Willow along the river edge.
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Potential Policies	Maintain unmodified 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. Maintenance as pasture and productive use of the pastoral land should be able to continue within the Atene Meander landscape character area as it does not detract from the landscape values associated with the landform.
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