

Pest Plant Operational Plan 2026 – 2027 and Monitoring Report 2025-2026

horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Author
Mike Beech

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Horizons Regional Council

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CONTACT 24 hr freephone 0508 800 80 Help@horizons.govt.nz www.horizons.govt.nz

SERVICE CENTRES	Kairanga Cnr Rongotea and Kairanga-Bunnythorpe Roads Palmerston North Marton 19 Hammond Street Taumarunui 34 Maata Street	REGIONAL HOUSES	Palmerston North 11-15 Victoria Avenue Whanganui 181 Guyton Street	DEPOTS	Taihape 243 Wairanu Road Taihape Woodville 116 Vogel Street

POSTAL ADDRESS Horizons Regional Council, Private Bag 11025, Manawatū Mail Centre, Palmerston North 4442 F 06-952 2929

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1 OVERVIEW

This Operational Plan and Monitoring Report details the previous year's activities, as well as the scope of activities Horizons intends to undertake for pest plant management and the implementation of Horizons Regional Pest Management Plan 2017-37 (the Plan) for the 2026-27 financial year. Performance measures and other targets by which performance can be assessed by Council are identified.

This Operational Plan delivers on the key priorities for pest plant management established through the Plan and Horizons non-regulatory pest plant management activity. The implementation components of pest plant management programmes are summarised as follows:

1.1 Direct management

Horizons funds and organises control for 18 plant species across the region and a further 11 plant species within individually-specified active management zones for regional benefit. Horizons records spatial information, plant population measures, the biological maturity and hence risk of spread, and abundance.

1.2 Regulation

Rules and restrictions are set, and compliance enforced with appropriate processes and penalties, including the recovery of costs incurred. Enforcement of the Plan rules, particularly good neighbour responsibilities, aims to prevent adverse effects of pest plants on the occupiers of clear properties and is a strong theme of Horizons new approach through the Plan.

The Plan includes both regulatory and non-regulatory commitments. Advising about and enforcing the rules is an additional component of the Pest Plant team's work. The principal objectives for pest plants identified in the Plan are surveillance, eradication, progressive containment, and boundary control. The Plan identifies that if the associated plant-specific rules are not met, an authorised person will:

1. Advise the occupier of their non-compliance and direct them to take remedial actions.
2. Follow the initial inspection with a further inspection to confirm what remedial action has been taken and/or identify outstanding requirements.
3. In circumstances of non-compliance, the authorised person will utilise the administrative and enforcement provisions of the Act.

1.3 Biological control

Horizons will release and redistribute appropriate agents for the control of production and environmental pest plants as biological control offers the prospect of ongoing suppression without the ongoing costs of physical or chemical intervention. Horizons will provide financial and logistical support for research into biocontrol agents and the biocontrol programme is structured around effective establishment, distribution and impact monitoring. We regularly liaise with occupiers to ensure the ongoing success of biological control release sites.

1.4 Surveillance

Horizons undertake inspections of potential infestation areas for high threat plants not presently known in the region and will monitor for, and act to eradicate, any infestation of the Exclusion species to prevent production and natural areas being adversely affected. Horizons staff also survey retail outlets to ensure compliance with regulations banning plants from propagation, distribution and sale in the Plan and the National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA). Surveillance is also carried out for notifiable plants and any discoveries will be reported to the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).

1.5 Awareness and behaviour change

Advice is given to raise awareness of pest plant problems and to provide land occupiers with information to control their own pest plants. This includes explaining people's obligations under the Plan and responding to complaints and enquiries from the public. Horizons' goal is to have an initial response to a complaint within three working days of the complaint being received. Awareness programmes are generally outcomes-focused, targeting changing people's behaviour, e.g. responsible gardening and freshwater hygiene. Horizons' biosecurity promotion activity also includes public liaison, including awareness and education programmes, developing community group initiatives and responding to complaints and enquiries from the public.

1.6 Resources

Within Horizons Biosecurity Pest Plant team there are five Biosecurity Officers - Plants (BOPs), two Senior Biosecurity Officer Plants (SBOPs) and one Team Leader– Pest Plants. They have primary responsibility for inspection, enforcement, advisory, and monitoring activities. The Biosecurity Officers are also responsible for organising contractors to carry out control work on eradication of targeted plants and enforcement work. Contractors undertake treatment or remedial work, although isolated plants and smaller sites may be treated or removed by BOPs. The activity of the Biosecurity plants team is further supported by activity of other Horizons teams, particularly the Biodiversity team who complete a substantial amount of pest plant control in priority bush remnants and wetlands.

2 MONITORING REPORT 2025-2026

The Plan describes in section 6.2 the monitoring required of pest plant operational plans from the Biosecurity Act 1993 (Section 100B 2):

Horizons will report annually, by August, on work conducted over the previous financial year to achieve the objectives of the Plan. Reporting will include (but is not restricted to) the following performance measures:

1. The results of inputs, outputs and outcomes monitoring. Reasons for changes in pest population or infestation number, size or density (positive or negative) will be explained;
2. The results of outcomes and outputs monitoring as detailed in any programmes to identify and control new incursions;
3. The change (positive or negative) in the extent of biocontrol agents and suggested reasons for the change.
4. The results of trials;

5. An evaluation of work programmes, including review of the operational plan and, if necessary, amendment;
6. Reporting on education initiatives with a statement on the perceived success of these, and guidance on the direction of future education work; and
7. An overview of community initiatives including extent of work, methods and results

The following sections provide detail against the seven performance measures.

2.1 Outcome monitoring against control programme targets

The Plan aim for the 'Eradication' suite of species is that all known sites are controlled to zero levels by 2027; with the exception of woolly nightshade and Chinese Pennisetum which is by 2037. The aim for the 'Progressive Containment-mapped' species is to reduce populations within a species respective Active Management Zone (AMZ). This reduction is measured similarly to the eradication species using a site status of percentage at zero levels.

Zero-levels is the term used to measure the effectiveness of site and species management for the Eradication and Progressive containment – mapped programmes. Included in the National Policy Direction (NPD) for Pest Management as the intermediate outcome for Eradication programmes it is used as the outcome measure for Horizons Annual Plan targets. The species this target applies to are listed in Table 1.

The percentage of sites at zero-levels across the Eradication and Progressive Containment – mapped programmes is 74.1%; higher than last year's 73.83%.

Zero-levels are determined in the Plan as 'a state where the pest is destroyed from that area but accepting that the pest may continue to appear in the area after destruction due to seed sources or migration from an unmanaged area'. When staff visit sites, the plant population is assessed and recorded in an operational and reporting database. If adult plants are found at site and it is likely they may have seeded or the site subject to a spread event if vegetatively spread species, the site is recorded as adult, and thus not at zero-levels. If the site contains seedlings from the previously created seedbank, or under effective management to prevent spread; then the site is recorded as, Seedling, Juvenile, or if no plants, Clear; all being a measure or zero-levels.

A number of factors affect the ability to achieve zero-levels across the range species managed in the region. The discovery of new sites from uncontrolled area spread, new movements or newly surveyed areas are generally always Adult, the persistence of some species at sites due to landcover preventing control of all individuals; or species factors such as biannual flowering. The year-on-year trend in Figure 9 highlights the recently stabilised and slowly increase zero-levels state of all sites managed as such by the pest plant team. The step changes in the graph between 2010-2019, 2019-23, and 2024-current relate to data system upgrades and programme changes in response to funding prioritisation.

Horizons pest plant site management programmes have received funding support through recent Annual plans which enables more work to find and treat sites. This can have the effect of reducing the current years zero-levels as new Adult sites are found.

Of the species that make up the zero-levels reporting Table 2 shows the Extent of Occurrence (EOO), Area of Occupancy (AOO), the number of sites under management and the measure of Adults, other and thus 'zero-level' status. The table draws attention to those species which contribute to the overall zero-levels result. Results between years showing change over time of zero-levels is also in Table 1, and graphically these are shown in Figure 1 at an overall view; and by programme level in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

Figure 4 and Figure 5 show the area of occupancy over programmes and Figure 6 the total area of occupancy for both programmes over time. The trend shows a reduction of the area of occupancy across both programmes. This is in part due to the rationalization of some species within the programmes where some areas no longer have planned work against some species due to resource and funding constraints.

Table 1: Species 2025-26 zero levels status. Species shaded green have increased zero level status in 2025-26.

Species	EOO (ha)	AOO (ha)	No. of Sites	No. Adult sites	No. sites at ZL	2025-26 ZL% Sites	2024-25 ZL% Sites	Notes
Eradication Programme								
African feather grass	2,257.5	0.14	90	11	79	**88%**	87%	A number of historic sites, with new areas managed in jointly funded project with the Department. Longstanding programme.
Alligator weed	40	0.0019	11	3	8	**73%**	60%	Risk of spread is high from river edge sites and requires constant surveillance; vegetative spread.
Arrowhead	0.002	0.00001	2	0	2	**100%**	100%	Well controlled.
Blue passion flower	1.1	0.052	65	4	61	**94%**	94%	
Cathedral Bells	79.1	0.79	32	14	18	**56%**	63%	Challenge to resource multiple visits per year as plants mature within six months.
Chilean rhubarb	878	0.82	409	53	356	**87%**	85%	
Chinese pennisetum	238.5	0.003	19	3	16	**84%**	90%	Persistent historic sites treated to prevent spread, requires multiple visits per year.
Climbing spindleberry	76.3	1.5	77	16	61	**79%**	77%	
Climbing alstromeria	2.25	0.24	12	2	10	**83%**	83%	
Himalayan balsam	1.2	0.005	16	4	12	**75%**	53%	
Knotweed (Asiatic and giant)	1.34	0	8	0	8	**100%**	100%	
Nassella tussock and Mexican feather grass	0.99	0	26	2	24	**92%**	89%	
Purple loosestrife	18.3	0.04	16	11	5	**31%**	38%	Eradication not feasible given size and number of sites in wetland environments, biological controls implemented.
Queensland poplar	15.3	0.002	37	1	36	**97%**	100%	
Rum Cherry	0.81	0	2	0	2	**100%**	0%	
Senegal tea	4.1	0.04	12	2	10	**83%**	73%	
Spartina	0.003	0	3	0	3	**100%**	100%	Joint management with the Department, separated sites, low levels and requires detector dog to

Species	EOO (ha)	AOO (ha)	No. of Sites	No. Adult sites	No. sites at ZL	2025-26 ZL% Sites	2024-25 ZL% Sites	Notes
								find new locations early to prevent spread.
Woolly nightshade	1,273.5	2.8	496	137	359	**72%**	82%	Significant new sites due to urban and peri-urban influence. Bird dispersal creates new locations in vegetated areas which take time to discover. Eradication not feasible.
Progressive Containment Mapped Programme								
Banana passionfruit	191.8	9	166	75	91	**55%**	61%	Significant spill over from unworked areas means new sites are on the increase.
Boneseed	505.4	0.012	93	10	83	**89%**	90%	
Contorta	50,478	5.5	220	78	142	**65%**	64%	Very few large coning trees left, the majority of adults are small early coning individuals, not stands.
Darwin's barberry	527.20	0.25	92	31	61	**66%**	64%	Early flowering plant means adult status removal requires intense management. Area reduction from 2 ha to 0.25 ha over three years highlights another measure of success.
Dwarf mountain pine	0.002	0.0006	2	1	1	**50%**	0%	Newly found location with coning tree found, expect this to be fully ZL in following years.
Evergreen buckthorn	79.8	0.02	22	6	16	**73%**	76%	Likely candidate for removal from programme and managed at place. More plants in urban areas as useful hedge plant, active spreader.
Grey willow	4	0	1	0	1	**100%**	100%	Very small active management zone aligning with historic multi agency work is reason for success.
Moth plant	6.1	0.06	98	10	88	**90%**	79%	
Mountain pine	0	0	0	0	0	**0%**	0%	None found to date.
Old man's beard	11,122	15.2	741	239	502	**68%**	70%	Suppressing and holding the line in areas, pushing back to GNPZ in others. Similar to other containment species, ongoing spread is problematic for 100% ZL in AMZ.
Scots pine	6	0.13	12	7	5	**42%**	38%	Small number of sites.
Total	68,000	36	2,780	720	2,060	**74.1%**	73.8%	

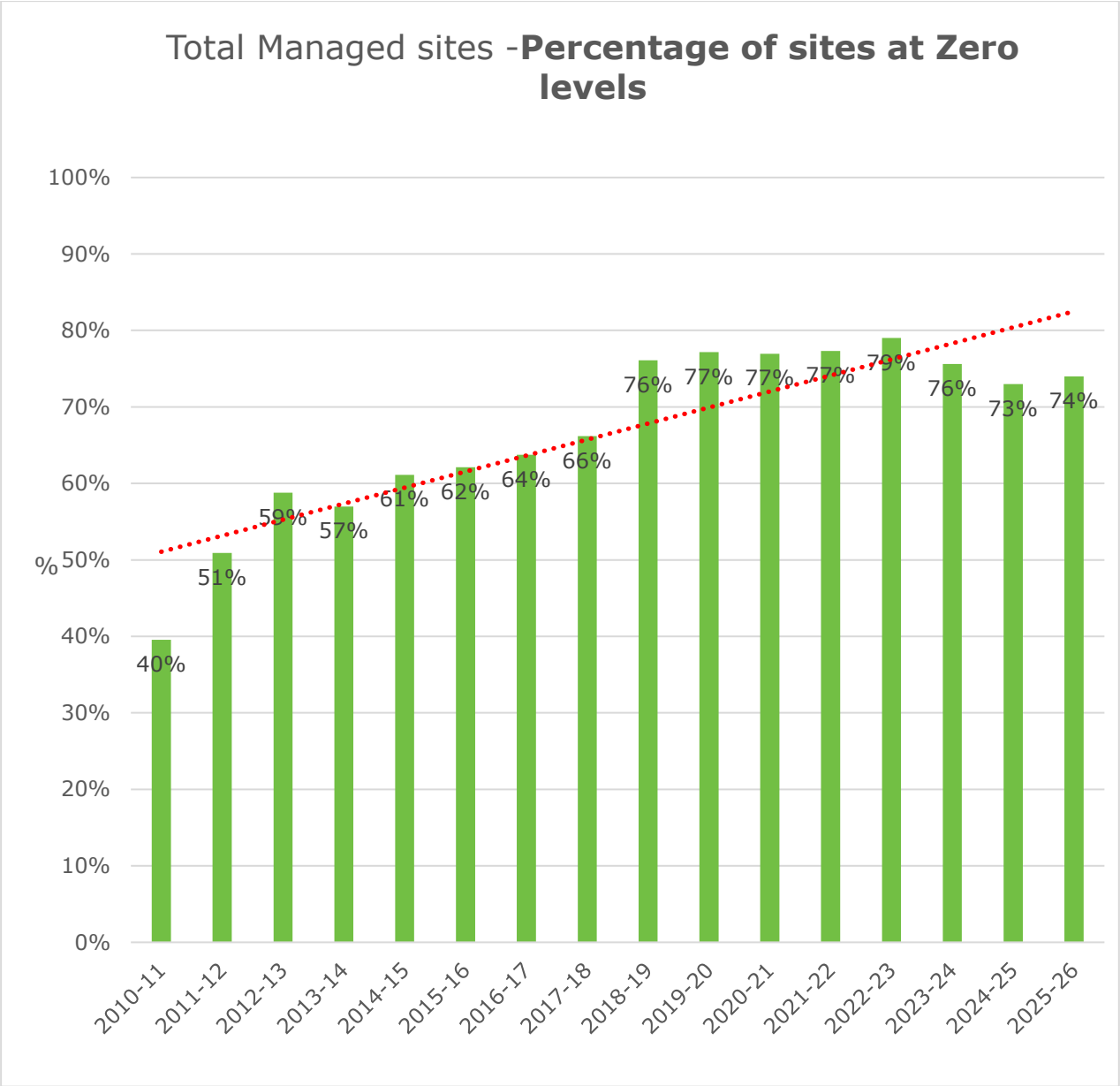


Figure 1: Total managed sites at zero levels.

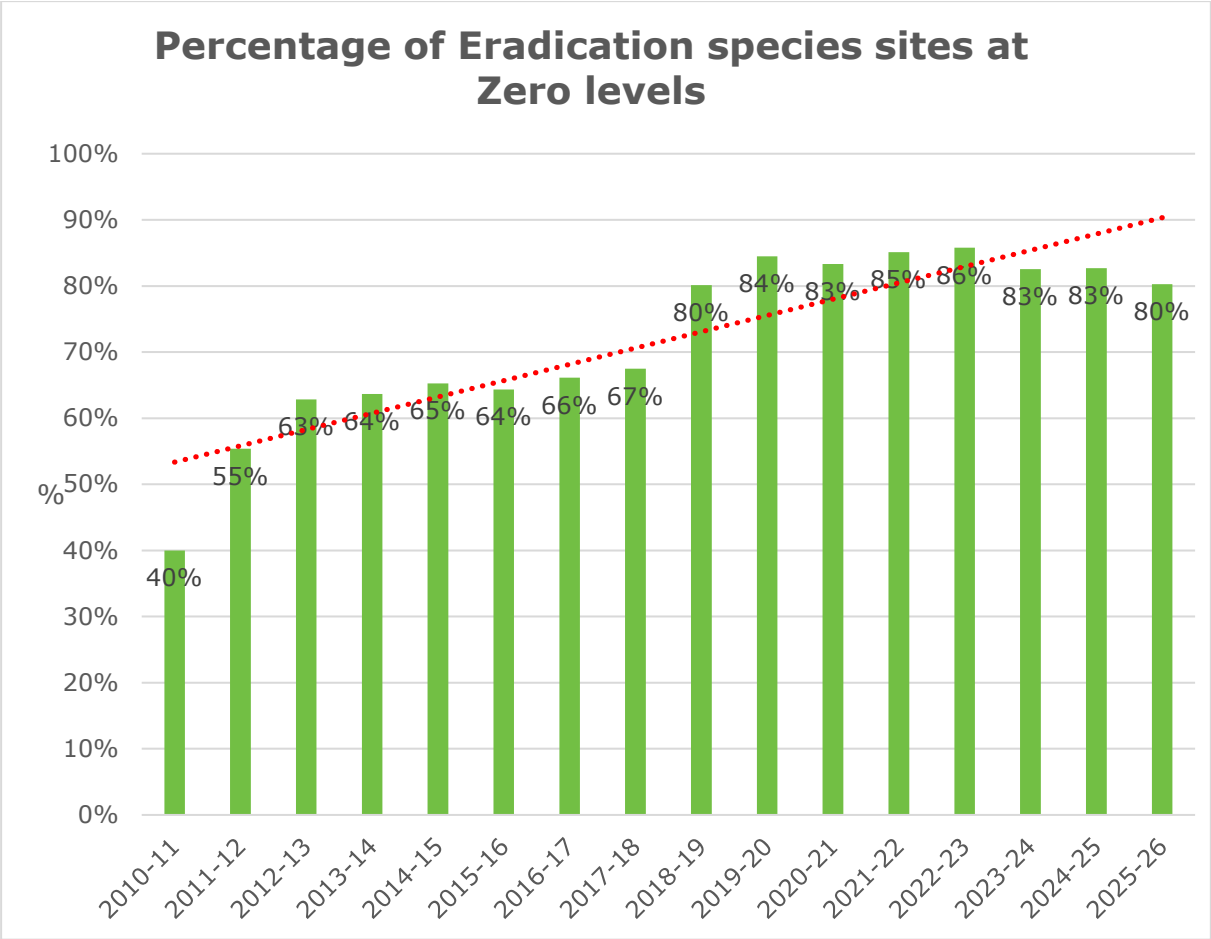


Figure 2: Eradication Species percentage at zero levels

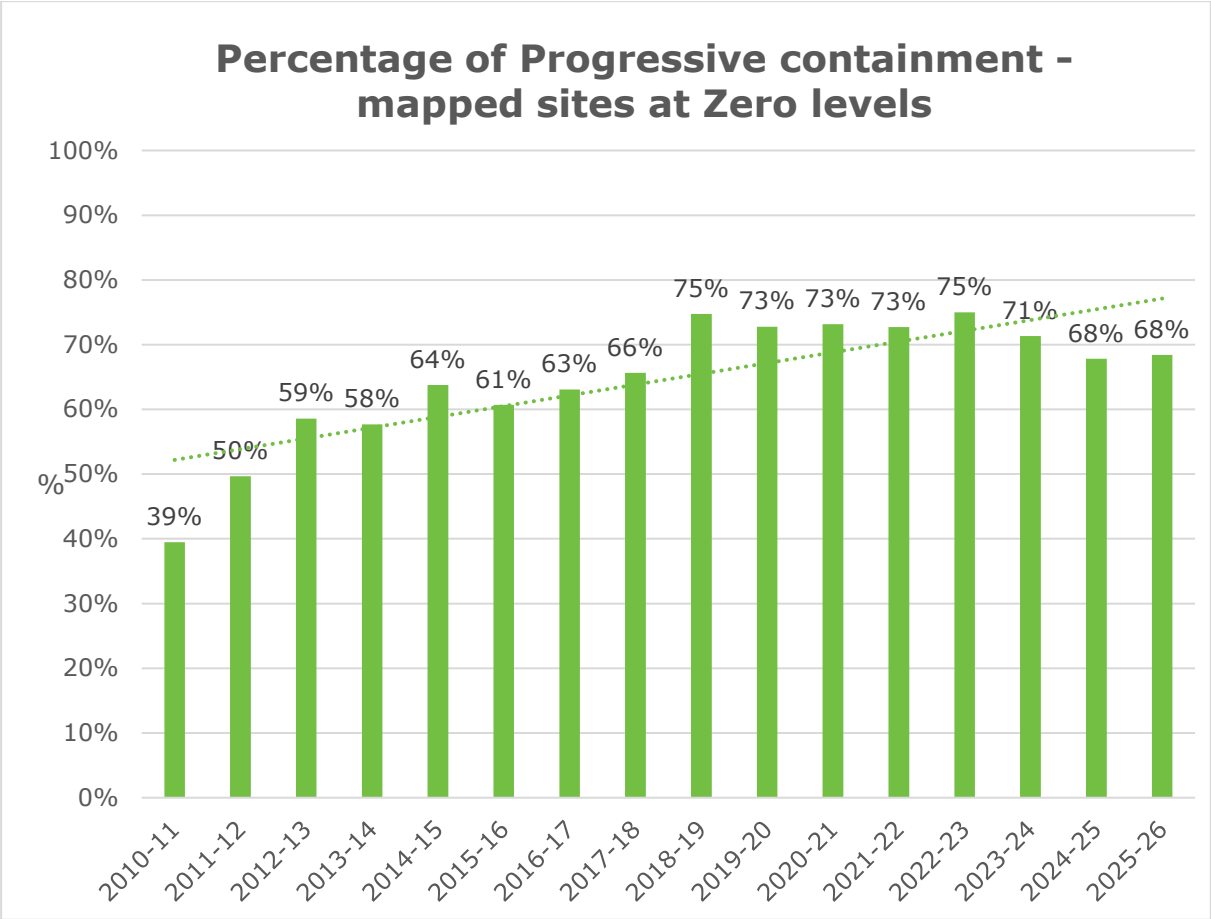


Figure 3: Progressive Containment - Mapped Species percentage at zero levels

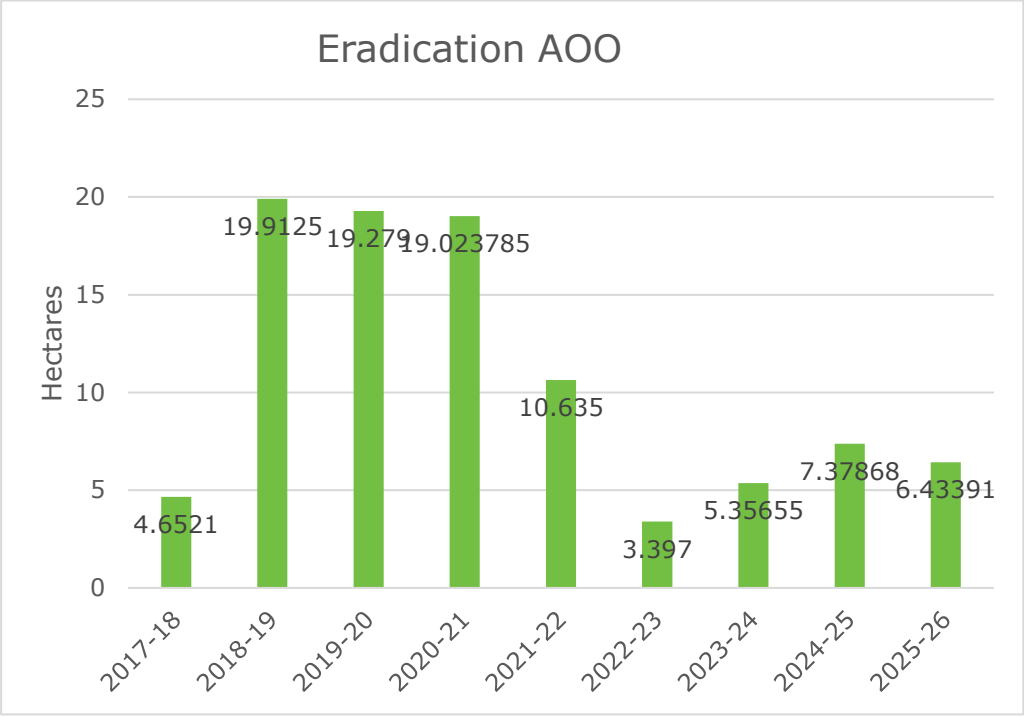


Figure 4: Eradication Species Area of Occupancy

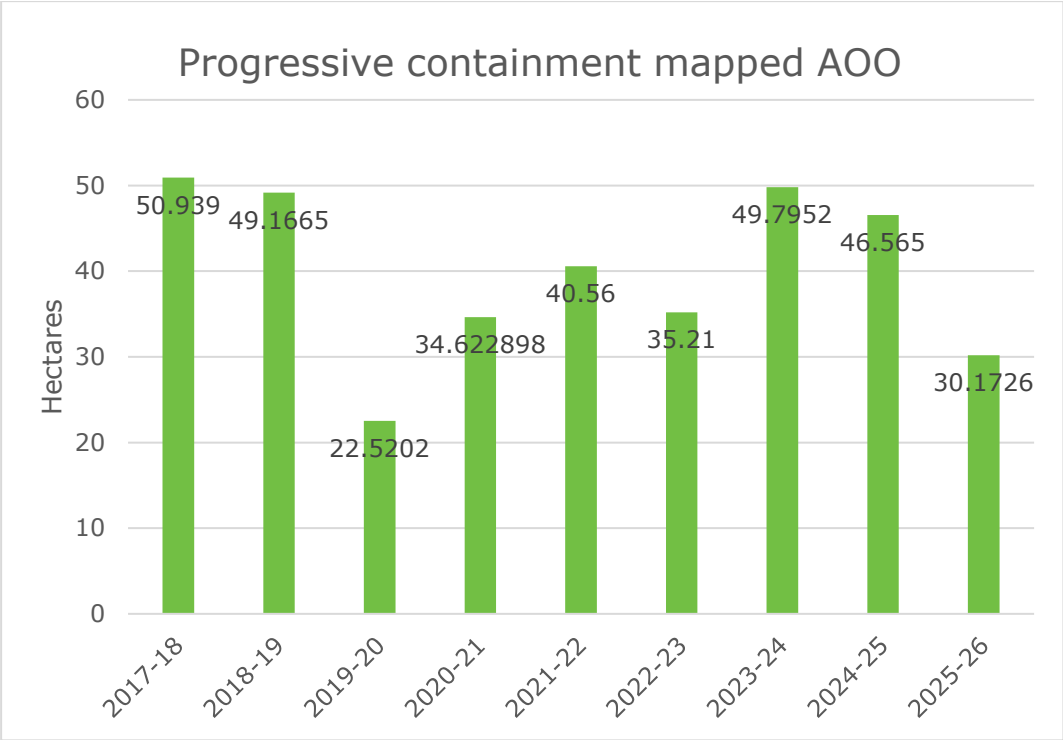


Figure 5: Progressive Containment Mapped species Are of Occupancy

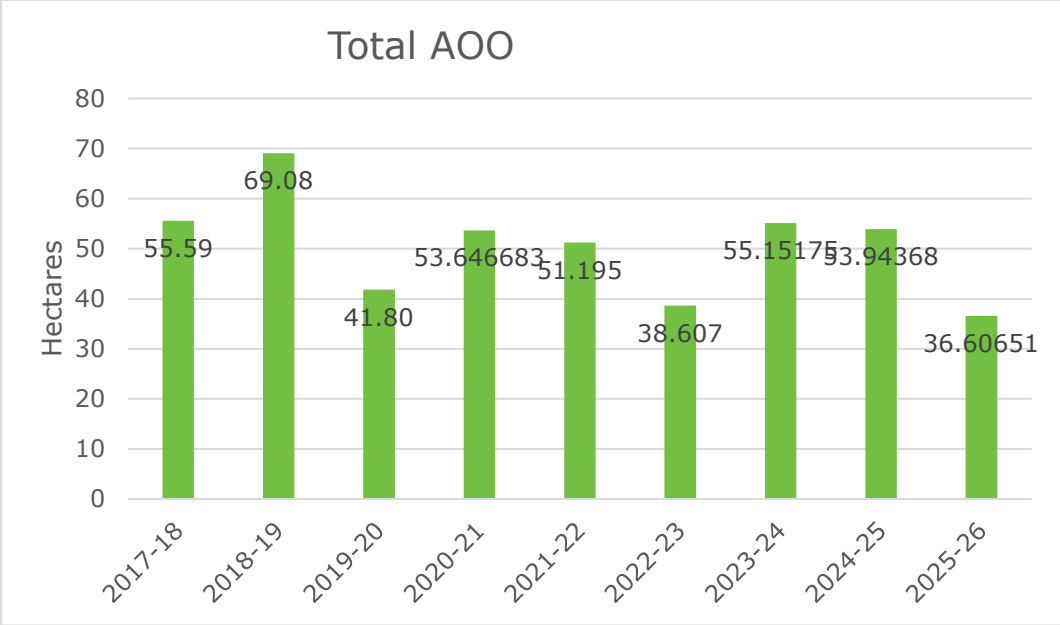


Figure 6: Combined Eradication and Progressive Containment Mapped Species Area of Occupancy

2.2 Outcome monitoring against new incursions

Sagittaria

Regrowth *sagittaria* was removed from the Pioneer Drain at Palmerston North in Jaunary 2026 with no plants discovered in the lower Mangaone Stream. The Eketahuna site which was discovered in summer 2024, has had only a handful of seedlings which were controlled in February 2026.

A potential sweet pittosporum site was identified through a member of the public on iNaturalist at a garden site near Halcombe in October 2025. The plant was never found despite several attempts by staff to locate it and after the original person who posted visited the site with staff it was deemed that the plant had been removed by the owners. Staff will continue to monitor the site just in case with the property already a site for Queensland poplar, one of the eradication species.

New to the region incursions

Fringed water lily continues to be controlled at two active sites in Tararua with only a handful of plants on the farm dam site and the old homestead pond site.

2.3 Extent of biological control agents

Biocontrol agent establishment and dispersal has been measured and progress of the significant projects staff are involved in are captured here:

Old man's beard sawfly

HRC received four releases in March 2026 and were released at existing sites in Tararua and Whanganui respectively. BSI have indicated that doing subsequent releases at existing sites will aid in establishment increasing the likelihood of individual sawflies mating and forming an established population. Signs of establishment are already present at Mangatainoka bluffs in Tararua and Rangitikei respectively.

Purple loosestrife agents

The root weevil was released in April 2026 on the edge of Lake Horowhenua. One of the beetle species was also released in very low numbers. Four different release methods were tried for the weevil and subsequent releases are planned for 26-27 at five sites within the Lake Horowhenua, Hokio Stream area.

Acacia longifolia gall forming wasps

The gall forming wasps have continued to show signs of population increase within the established sites at Whanganui and Waitarere. The wasps have been moved to Waikawa and have shown signs of establishment there. Galls have also been redistributed at the Whanganui site to aid the spread of the agent.

Field horsetail weevils

A survey by both BSI and HRC staff in November 2025 discovered the establishment of the weevil at three sites near Whanganui. This is the first evidence of establishment since they were first released in 2017.

Chilean flame creeper beetle

Chilean flame creeper beetles were released in three locations in the Rangitikei in March. The beetles feed on the leaves and can defoliate entire plants when large populations are present.

2.4 Results of trials

Not applicable in 2025-26 as no trials were undertaken

2.5 An evaluation of work programmes

Prioritisation of Plan species programs

Staff developed an in-house prioritisation tool in 2024 to help rationalise Plan programmes that were not fully funded or resourced. The findings of the first-round use of the tool were implemented in the 25-26 FY. This included aerial surveys of high-priority areas with high values and limited data on the Plan species targeted by the survey. This data was utilised for the upcoming Plan review as well as being input into the prioritisation tool to ensure that funding was best used for those particular species in those areas.

Some species have been deprioritised as part of this exercise including grey willow and evergreen buckthorn with both of these species not having active programmes due to lack of funding and resourcing. Evergreen buckthorn has much larger distribution across the active management zone within the region than previously thought with large contingent of this distribution within urban areas of Palmerston North and Levin which would require considerable staff time for surveying and control due to the large volume of small individual properties.

Maps and additional details regarding reporting can be found in the operational plan section.

2.6 Reporting on education initiatives

Staff helped to develop a module for the river management team to help identify pest plants located in the Plan and what to do around pathway management and ensuring their contractors were employing best practice for machinery hygiene. Resources developed for the module will be used on an ongoing basis by the river management team.

2.7 Overview of community initiatives

Staff developed an iNaturalist project to identify any Plan species that were observed in the community that can be responded to in a short period of time. The project is set up to send an email alert to the staff member in the corresponding area. The sweet pittosporum observation was a good example of staff being able to respond quickly to an iNaturalist email alert rather than manually searching observations.

A *phragmites karka* open day was held in February at Kitchener Park to discuss latest research findings and also any potential next steps for its management. Horizons continues to support the community by providing best practice advice to those groups who are controlling this species. Staff also visited a site at Greater Wellington Regional Council where they were controlling a site in the dunes by excavation.

3 2026-2027 Operational Plan

3.1 Financial Overview

Council apportions the rate take for Pest Plant Biosecurity into programmes that were created under the previous Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy, and this split is used for financial reporting. The Plan designations have a slightly different breakdown of activity within the cost codes. Table 2 maps Council programme name to the Operational Plan programme. These figures include an additional $834,000 of external revenue on top of the baseline rate take which includes National Wilding Conifer Control funding from MPI, the Department funding for Ruahine old man's beard and Whanganui River trench African feather grass programs, Desert Road partner funding for gorse flight and funding from MPI for Check, Clea, Dry awareness program.

Table 2: 2026-27 Horizons internal programme description to Operational Plan Programme map

Internal programme name	Equivalent Operational Plan programme	2026-27 Operational Plan budget
Biological Control	Biological control	$215,090.00
Crown/Non-rateable	Eradication/PC-mapped and unmapped	$78,302.00
Surveillance activity	Exclusion/Response, Investigation and Surveillance	$98,679.00
Production	Exclusion / Eradication/ PC-mapped/ PC-unmapped	$503,708.00
Zero-density	Eradication/PC-mapped/PC-unmapped	$2,304,639.00
Promotion	Promotion	$161,752.00
National and regional initiatives	Regional Pest Management Plan Review	$127,750
TOTAL		**$3,489,920.00**

Every effort is being made to deliver on the Pest Plan targets and outcomes, while operating within this budget. Close monitoring of expenditure will ensure budgets are not exceeded.

4 ANNUAL PLAN TARGETS

Table 3: Biosecurity Plants Annual Plan targets for 2026-27.

Performance Measures for Levels of Service	2026-27
Any exclusion category pest plants that are found in the region are promptly managed, with an initial response plan completed within the specified timeframe that is appropriate for that particular species.	Response plans enacted with their specified timeframes (target 100%)
Number of managed sites at zero-levels (ZL) increases for pest plants identified for Eradication and Progressive Containment - mapped in the Regional Pest Management Plan.	Overall percentage of managed sites at zero-levels (ZL) increases from the baseline year (2023-24), which is 76%.

Financially support the national bio-control agent development programme and report annually to Council on this programme.	Financial support provided and annual report to Council
Monitoring of Plan programmes according to Biosecurity Act requirements	Annual monitoring report to Council

5 REGIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Programme overview

The Biosecurity Plants activity is strongly linked to the delivery of Horizons' Plan, which can be reached via the following link 2017-2037-regional-pest-management-plan.pdf
The activity reporting is arranged in sections as per the Plan groupings for pest plant management programmes as outlined in Table 4. More information on these groupings is on page 25 of the Plan.

Table 4 Activity Summary for Biosecurity Plants

Aim	Programme	Key Deliverables
Preventing establishment	Exclusion Programme	Keep unwanted pest plants that are not present out of the region.
Eradicating	Eradication Programme	Controlling and reducing the prevalence and extent of Eradication species.
Rolling back	Progressive Containment Programme	Containing and reducing the geographic distribution of the pest plant to an area over time.
Maintaining low densities	Progressive Containment – unmapped	Ongoing control to reduce species' impact and spread to other properties.

The biosecurity plants are continuing their reporting structure through the Integrated Catchment Committee based on Species Management Units (SMUs). This was introduced last financial year following a prioritisation exercise. SMUs are an individual species management programme divided into areas based on presence/absence, abundance of the species and geographical features. Each eradication and progressive containment – mapped species have been split into SMUs that have the following categories:

- Planned – Works planned for the FY
- In progress – Works currently underway but noy yet completed
- Completed – Works completed for the FY
- Deferred – Works planned for SMU but have been deferred to a subsequent FY
- No planned work – No works planned in SMU due to funding shortages; would be worked if resources available, and/or high abundance of species; will not be worked even if resources available as lower priority than other species or intractable infestations.

Appendices 8.1. 8.2 and 8.3 show the SMU maps for all species in exclusion, eradication and progressive containment mapped categories. Only those species with active site management are

reported in the SMU structure, hence only one species (*Saggittaria platyphylla*) in the exclusion category with two active sites in the region.

5.2 Regional Pest Management Plan Activity

5.2.1 Preventing establishment - Exclusion Programme

For pest plants that are in New Zealand but not in our region, Horizons' goal is to prevent establishment. We aim to detect these plants before they become widely established in the region and facilitate a quick response through appropriate funding that will enable the control or management of these species on rateable land. There are 11 species in this category and Chilean needle grass is an example.

Staff will monitor the regrowth of *Sagittaria platyphylla* at both the Pioneer Drain and Eketahuna sites. Both sites now have very low numbers of plants based on site visits from last FY.

Other species covered by the surveillance plan are included in Table 12 in the appendices. Note the following species (Table 5) have been removed from the work programme due to species-specific reasons such as no ability to control, covered more fully by a national programme or aquatic nature has limited surveillance potential; similar to previously discontinued species.

Table 5: Exclusion species removed from work programme in 2026-27

Species	Removal rationale
Heath rush	Department estate recipient of vectors
Humped bladderwort	No control tools available
Manchurian wild rice	MPI National Interest Pest Response target
Phragmites australis	Same effects as *P.karka* and is well controlled in Hawkes Bay with no spread risk.
Sagittaria platyphylla	Move to Eradication as control will be long term.
Tussock hawkweed	Department estate recipient of vectors

5.2.2 Eradication Programme

High-risk species that should be completely removed from the region are managed via the Eradication programme. There are 18 species in this category and at the start of the financial year our information was that 80% of the 1,333 sites were at zero levels.

As mentioned above, the programme will be reporting in SMUs which the numbers are mentioned in Table 6. A similar programme to previous years across all Eradication species. The Department have provided funding again for this FY for the Whanganui River trench with Horizons managing the whole program from the top to the bottom of the catchment, rum cherry is proposed to be removed from the plan and thus will be deprioritised for this FY, following on the detection of the species in eDNA hits and difficulty identifying it from other *Prunus* species. A total of $295,000 to be spent on this program, with the detail described in Table 6.

Table 6: Eradication species planned activity

Species	Activity	External HRC Cost
African feather grass	Whanganui River trench surveillance and control with additional $12k of funding for the Department portion. Manawatu River surveillance and control in Tararua district.	$25,000
Alligator weed	Taumarunui and Mangone Stream surveillance and control. Staff time also includes pathway management for both sites including checking machinery is clean and signage when required	$40,000
Arrowhead	Control and surveillance at Levin site	
Blue passionflower	Urban site treatment across Whanganui, Palmerston North, Manawatū and Horowhenua.	
Cathedral bells	Sites visited and treated twice yearly; across the southern half of the region	$38,000
Chilean rhubarb	Control and surveillance across region. Large sites in Tararua, Rangitikei and Whanganui contracted out. Large site discovered recently in Tararua ranges behind Palmerston North	$91,500
Chinese *pennisetum*	Whanganui River sites control and surveillance.	$25,000
Climbing *alstromeria*	Surveillance and staff controlled. Southern half of region	
Climbing spindleberry	Region wide control. Sites in Tararua, Horowhenua and Pohangina contracted out	$12,500
Himalayan balsam	Surveillance and control in Tararua, southern Ruapehu district, Marton and Horowhenua	
Knotweed	Ongoing control and surveillance in Palmerston North and Ongarue	
Nassella tussock spp	Staff control and surveillance at small, mostly urban sites region wide	
Purple loosestrife	Operationally treated as Progressive Containment - mapped programme. No active control of Lake Horowhenua, Hokio Stream, and Nga Kawau Lagoon due to lack on control tools and political reasons. Staff control outside of the aforementioned areas region wide	
Queensland Poplar	Urban Whanganui, Palmerston North and Levin control by staff	
Rum Cherry	Sites in Ohakune and Owhango, species deprioritised for this FY due to proposed removal from Plan	
Senegal tea	Staff to treat sites in Whanganui, Ashhurst, Palmerston North and Kuku.	$3,000
Spartina	Biodiversity team managing Manawatu estuary sites and staff managing Waikawa Stream sites. Consultation with the Department around roles and responsibilities going forward	
Woolly nightshade	Control and surveillance at prioritised sites in Horowhenua, Palmerston North, Tararua, Taumarunui and inland Whanganui. Due to prioritisation and funding shortages no work is planned for urban and coastal Whanganui district down to Rangitikei River mouth. Levin urban area deprioritised.	$60,000

5.2.3 Rolling back – Progressive Containment programme

Where population levels or difficulty and expense of control prevent achievement of a region-wide zero-density objective, high-threat pest plant species will be managed under a Progressive Containment objective. For each species managed this way, an active management zone is defined within which the pest plant species will be controlled wherever it is found, as in the Eradication designation. An overview of 26/27 target species programmes and spend is found in Table 7.

5.2.3.1 Progressive Containment - Mapped Species

Where population levels or difficulty and expense of control prevent achievement of a region-wide zero-density objective, high-threat pest plant species will be managed under a Progressive Containment objective. For each species managed this way, an active management zone is defined within which the pest plant species will be controlled wherever it is found, as in the Eradication designation. Pm Progressive Containment - Mapped Species Eleven Progressive Containment species fall into the mapped category (e.g. old man's beard). At the start of the year the data showed 68% of 1,447 sites were at zero levels in the zones actively managed for these species.

The old man's beard joint programme with Department of Conservation (the Department) for the Ruahine Forest Park and surrounding area is continuing this financial year. Department funding has remained at similar levels for this project since last FY. Similar to program to last year with no major changes since last FY. A total of $712,500 external is to be spent on the program.

Table 7: Progressive Containment - Mapped species activity

Species	Activity	External HRC cost
Banana passionfruit	Control and surveillance in Tararua, Pohangina Horowhenua and Whanganui.	$61,000
Boneseed	Control and surveillance in Whanganui, Ashhurst, Foxton, Waitarere. All Waitarere Forest blocks excluded from program due to lack of funding and prioritised areas elsewhere	$1,000
Darwin's barberry	Programs in Ruapehu district, Ruahine Forest Park buffer, Waeawaepa and Puketoi buffer	$21,000
Evergreen buckthorn	Program is no longer viable due to large number of sites across the lower half or the region within the active management zone.	
Grey Willow	Program is no longer viable with no active program in the active management zone	
Moth plant	Whanganui and Horowhenua areas, in- house control surveillance and control	
Old man's beard	Horizon's biggest programme. Programmes being conducted region- wide. Ruahine conjoint program continuing this FY with both aerial and ground control and surveillance.	$519,500
Pest conifers	Work against four pest conifer species, time and contribution towards the national wilding conifer control programme where Horizons acts as fund holder and has two staff as project managers for work within the central plateau. Expenditure also includes support for the Wilding Pine Network and the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme (NWCCP) fund holder role.	$100,000
General expense	Chemicals and equipment upkeep	$10,000

5.2.3.2 Progressive Containment – Unmapped Species

Fifteen Progressive Containment species make up the unmapped category (e.g. gorse). These species are generally widespread, but some parts of the region are clear, and it is desirable to keep

them clear. This programme does not have a strong information base to report on progress against these weeds. Horizons' involvement is primarily through regulation via the Good Neighbour or Clear Land rules of the Plan and through non-regulatory advice or in some cases by biological control. For occupiers of large land areas, farmers and other organisations we have the ability to allow responsibility to be acknowledged, and actions planned via Approved Management Plans (AMP). A list of the organisations suitable for AMPs is found in Table 8. The intent of these plans is to meet the objectives of rules and contribute to the outcomes of the Plan by eradicating or reducing the spread of pest plants from the place/s occupied or managed by the plan-maker.

Table 8: Summary of Pest Plant Management Plan documents with Territorial Authorities and Crown Entities.

TA/ Crown Agency	Approved Management Plan
Ruapehu District Council	Current
Rangitikei District Council	Current
Whanganui District Council	Current
Manawatū District Council	Current
Tararua District Council	Current
Palmerston North City Council	Current
Horowhenua District Council	Current
NZTA – Southern	Current
NZTA – Northern	Current
KiwiRail	Current
The Department	N/A
LINZ	N/A

Project Yellow, the Desert Road invasive legume control project, is continuing this FY. Flights for gorse mapping are to be completed in October with Bioeconomy Science Institute undertaking the mapping process again. From previous distribution map assessment include that the outliers are very important to the overall success of the project. A total of $4,088 is to be spent on the project contributing to the production of broom density maps.

5.2.3.3 Progressive Containment – Unmapped aquatic species

Aquatic pest plants are also part of the Progressive Containment – Unmapped grouping of the RPMP and are grouped together on the basis that they are aquatic pests managed the same way for the same objectives. Eel grass, egeria, hornwort, lagarosiphon and reed sweetgrass are aquatic pest plants included in the Progressive Containment section of the Plan. Their distributions are not mapped with any certainty, and our aim is to progressively contain or reduce the number of sites affected across the region, to prevent further spread and to reduce adverse effects on the environment.

Activity is focused on staff time to support the Check Clean Dry freshwater advocacy campaign. And responding to enquiries. This is reported in the Awareness section.

6 Other Pest Plant Management Programmes

6.1 INCURSION RESPONSE

6.1.1 Programme overview

The Incursion Response programme aims to provide immediate and effective assistance for all national or regional biosecurity incursions and any transitions to long-term management. This is a function detailed by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and regional councils.

6.1.2 Velvetleaf

The longstanding velvetleaf programme will continue this year with Horizons funding use of the detection dog as well as part-funding with other regional councils in the North Island for a community contractor who has been liaising with farmers affected by velvetleaf. This community contractor will help coordinate the surveillance contractor flights and respond to any enquiries that landowners may have about velvetleaf. A total of $6,000 external dollars is to be spent on the program.

6.1.3 Sea spurge

The sea spurge response will continue with the Department employing a full-time ranger committed to the project for the North Island's west coast from Waikato down to Wellington. Horizons will provide support by controlling some sites. A total of 60 hours will be committed by the Pest Plant team to help with surveillance and control when required.

7 BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

7.1.1 Programme overview

Many entrenched pest plants in the region are now the target of our Biological Control programme, which aims to assist the development of insects and diseases to control a wide range of pest plants and to release, distribute and monitor those agents within the region. The overview of 26/27 programme expenses is included in Table 9.

7.1.2 Purple loosestrife

Staff released the root weevil at Lake Horowhenua last FY in conjunction with Muaupoko Tribal Authority Inc. staff. Further releases of the root weevil are planned for this FY at six sites across the infested area including surrounding Lake Horowhenua and Hokio Stream. There are some beetles still in containment but have proved difficult to mass rear. Some funding will be put towards trying to establish a colony in the lab for release this FY if possible.

7.1.3 Old man's beard

Staff will be receiving four releases of old man's beard sawfly this season to be released in Palmerston North and Whanganui respectively. Staff will continue to monitor release sites from previous seasons with signs that sites have established in Tararua and Rangitikei respectively.

7.1.4 Chilean flame creeper

Staff have received some releases for this FY with BSI staff having extras from successful breeding in the lab. These have been released around the Southern Ruapehu district around Ohakune.

7.1.5 Sydney golden wattle

Bioeconomy Science Institute are undertaking a drone flight of the dune areas of Whanganui infested with Sydney golden wattle as a baseline for assessing the impact that the Sydney golden wattle wasp has on flower production. The wasp has established at the site, and photography will occur again once densities of the wasp are large enough.

Table 9: Overall Biological Control Programme expenditure (2026-27)

Biological Control costs	$118,000
New Zealand BC Collective	$35,000
ID service	$4,000
Old man's beard sawfly releases x 4	$23,000
Sydney golden wattle wasp drone flight	$6,000
Purple loosestrife project	$50,000

7.2 INVESTIGATION

7.2.1 Programme overview

A number of plants present in the region may have the potential to become economically and ecologically damaging. This output contains the Pest Plant Investigation Programme and the National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA). Complaints are responded to by the team on an as and when required basis.

7.2.2 AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

7.2.3 Programme overview

The aim of the Awareness Programme is to alert the community to issues, threats and solutions to ensure region-wide best-practice pest plant management. This includes responding to enquiries from the community and undertaking collaborative projects.

Staff will again seek funding from MPI for the Check Clean Dry (CCD) programme to advocate for behaviour change by freshwater users. Horizons will also support this programme with financial and in-kind contributions.

Staff will work with Horizons communications staff to promote weed species through the 'weed wizard' videos and a particular focus on spreading the message around controlling urban weeds like woolly nightshade where we have rolled back service delivery.

7.3 COLLABORATIVE PEST PLANT CONTROL

7.3.1 Programme overview

Collaborative projects undertaken by Horizons staff and external stakeholders provide a team approach to managing weeds in some challenging environments. Working with others and providing advice and leadership has delivered some excellent results that otherwise would not have eventuated. A summary of this activity is provided in Table 10

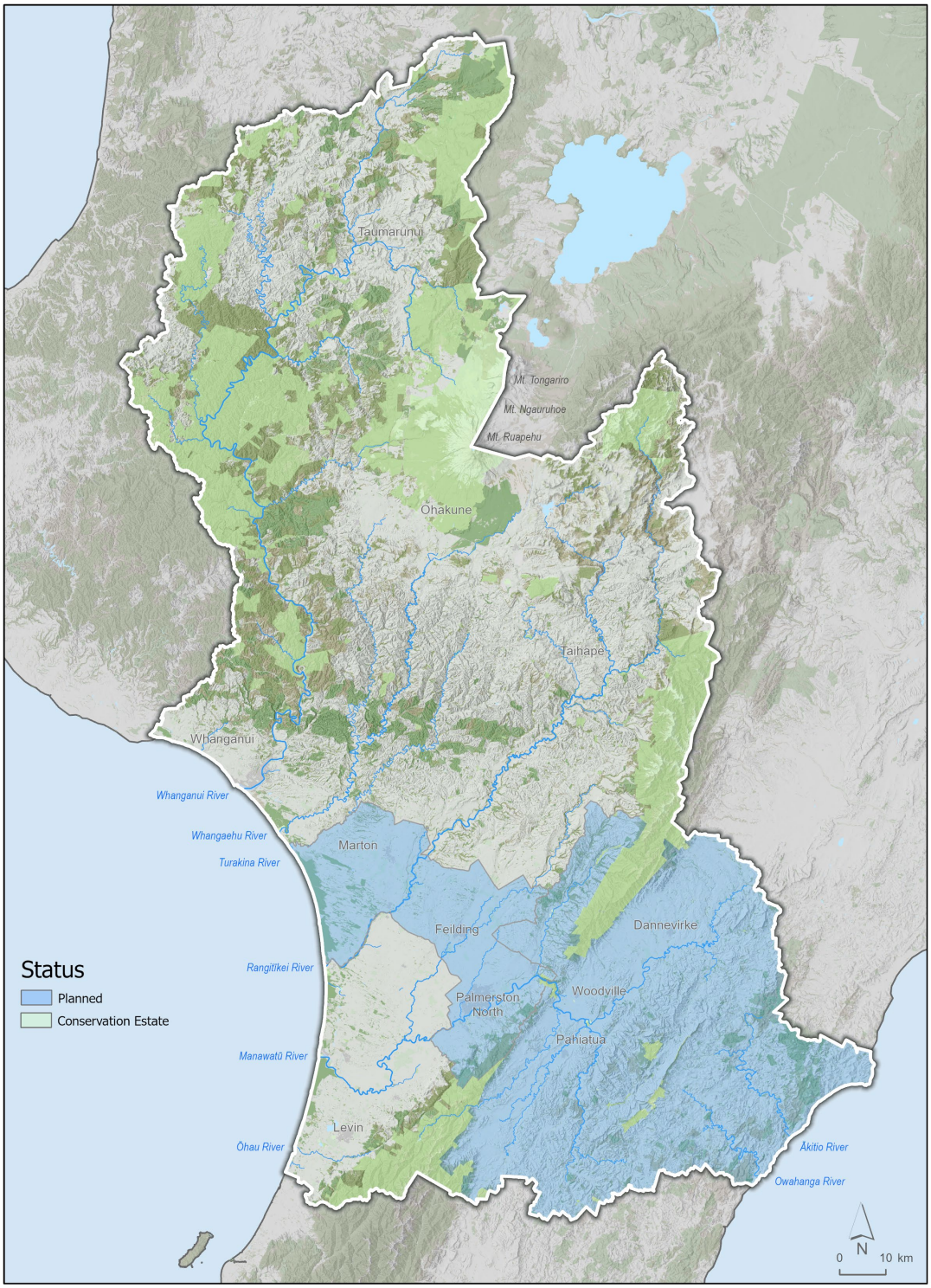
Table 10: Collaborative Pest Plant Control Projects.

Project	Key Deliverables	Horizons' Role
Wilding Conifer – Central North Island Regional Coordination Group (RCG)	Work with partners and other stakeholders on: • Planning for management unit (MU) activity and reporting • Managing the budget • Annual meeting scheduled Deliver on annual work programmes as agreed by RCG.	Contracted to MPI as the agency for managing Central Government funding for this activity in the Central North Island. Fund holder and Chair of the RCG.
Central North Island Wilding Conifer Group	Facilitate the sharing of programme information amongst a broad group of Central Plateau conifer controlling organisations	To coordinate the biennial meetings and chair the meetings
Desert Road Invasive Legume Control Group	• Relationship between parties maintained. • Memorandum of Understanding maintained and implemented. • Coordinated action in priority areas undertaken against target species.	Relationship between parties maintained. Meeting facilitation with Waikato Regional Council
Freshwater Biosecurity Partnership Programme and CCD advocacy programme.	Representing Horizons at a national forum to champion behaviour change and freshwater protection. Attendance at high-risk events and strong advocacy	Provide staff and manage the CCD programme in the region.

Project	Key Deliverables	Horizons' Role
	with the main users of waterways in our headwater areas.	
Ruahine Ranges old man's beard conjoint project (Department/Horizons)	Surveying and controlling old man's beard within the park and the buffer surrounding it. Also reporting on an annual basis as per management plan.	Contract management including auditing, managing health and safety, quality control and acting as a fund holder.
Whanganui River trench African feather grass project (Department/Horizons)	Surveying and controlling African feather grass within the Whanganui River trench both the Department and private land	Contract management including auditing, managing health and safety, quality control and acting as a fund holder.
Sea spurge	Work with partner organisations to control plants at known sites. Assisting the Department Sea spurge ranger with surveillance and shared communication activities if required	Surveillance and control at some sites in conjunction with the Department, communications activities including social media and outreach campaigns
Velvetleaf	Commit $3,000 to shared contract with North Island regional councils for employment of community liaison officer. Providing funding for surveillance of known sites with detector dog at least twice during the growing season	Assistance with removing plants if any found. Liaising with community liaison officer about landowners. Providing advice for affected landowners where needed.

8 APPENDIX

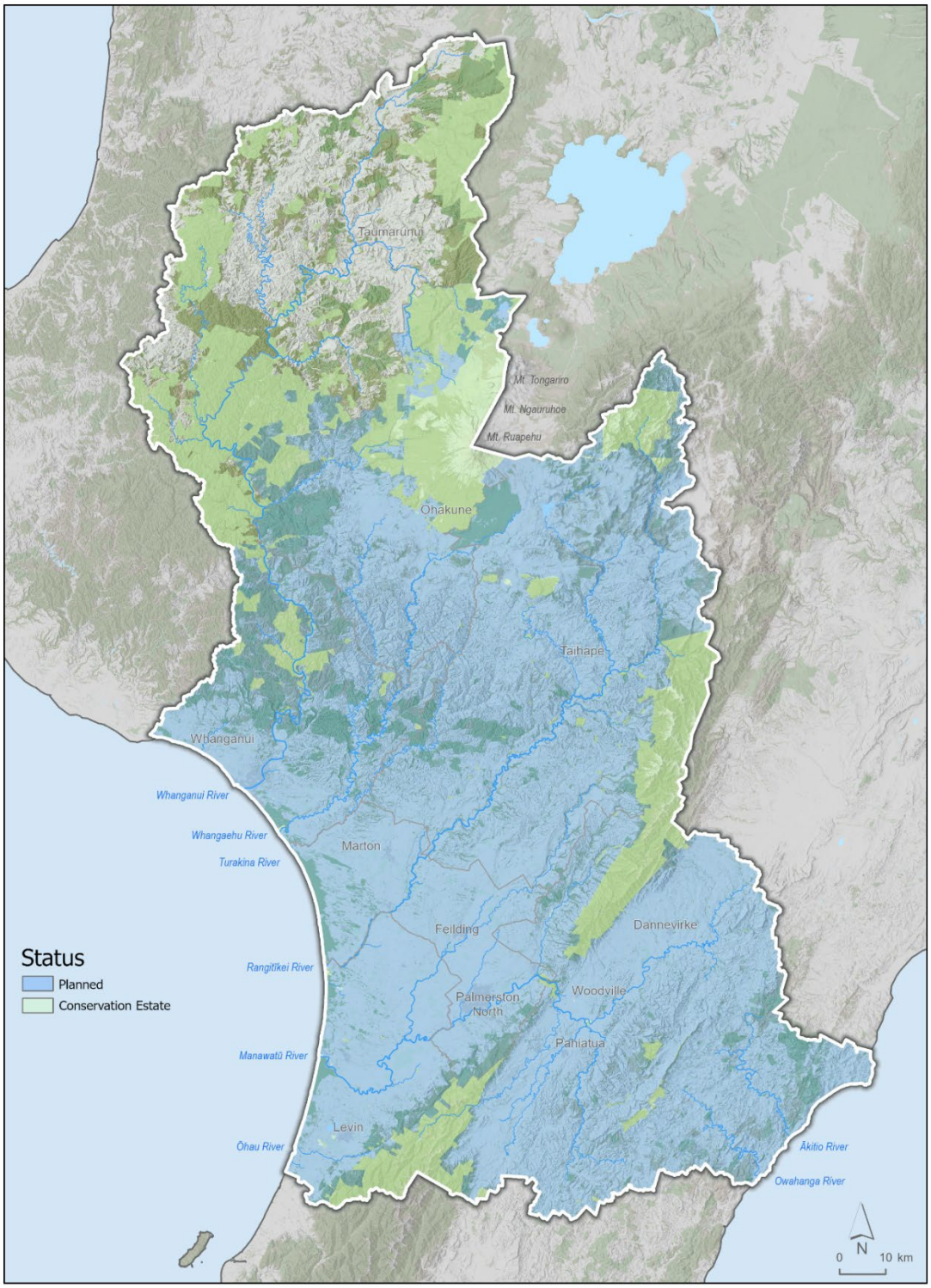
8.1 Species Management Unit Maps Exclusion Species



Sagittaria 2026-2027

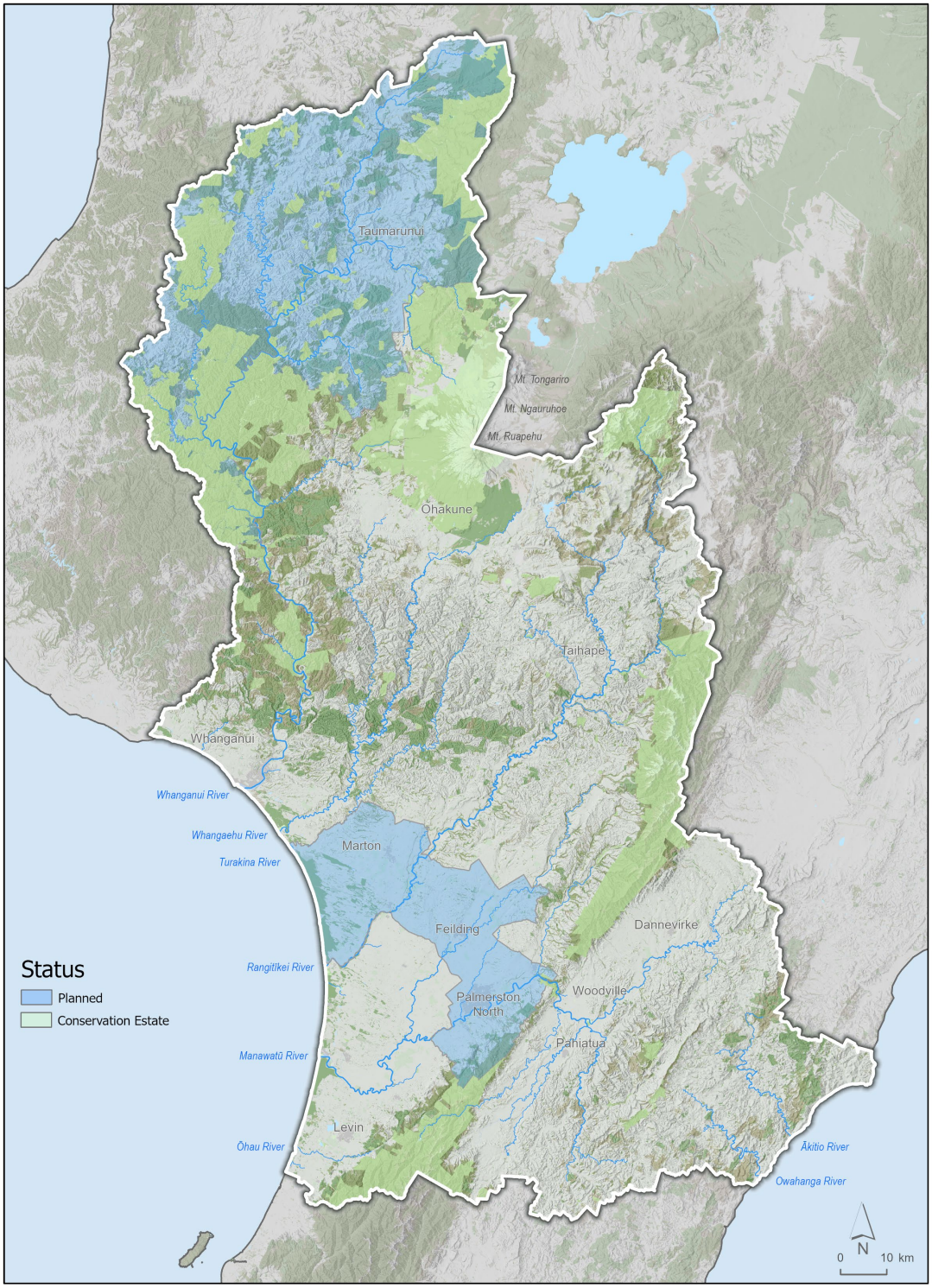
Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026

8.2 Species Management Unit Maps
Eradication Species



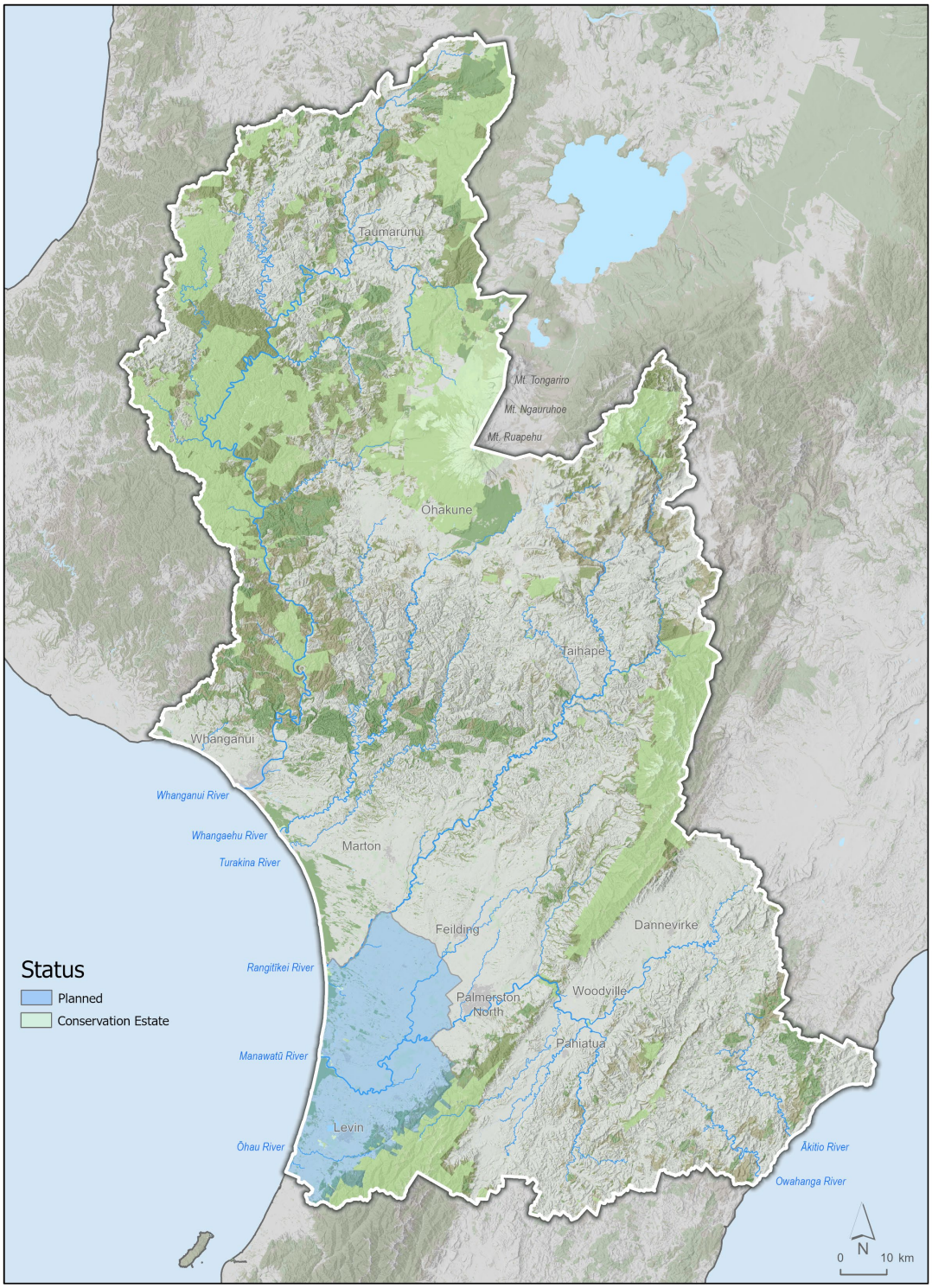
African Feather Grass 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



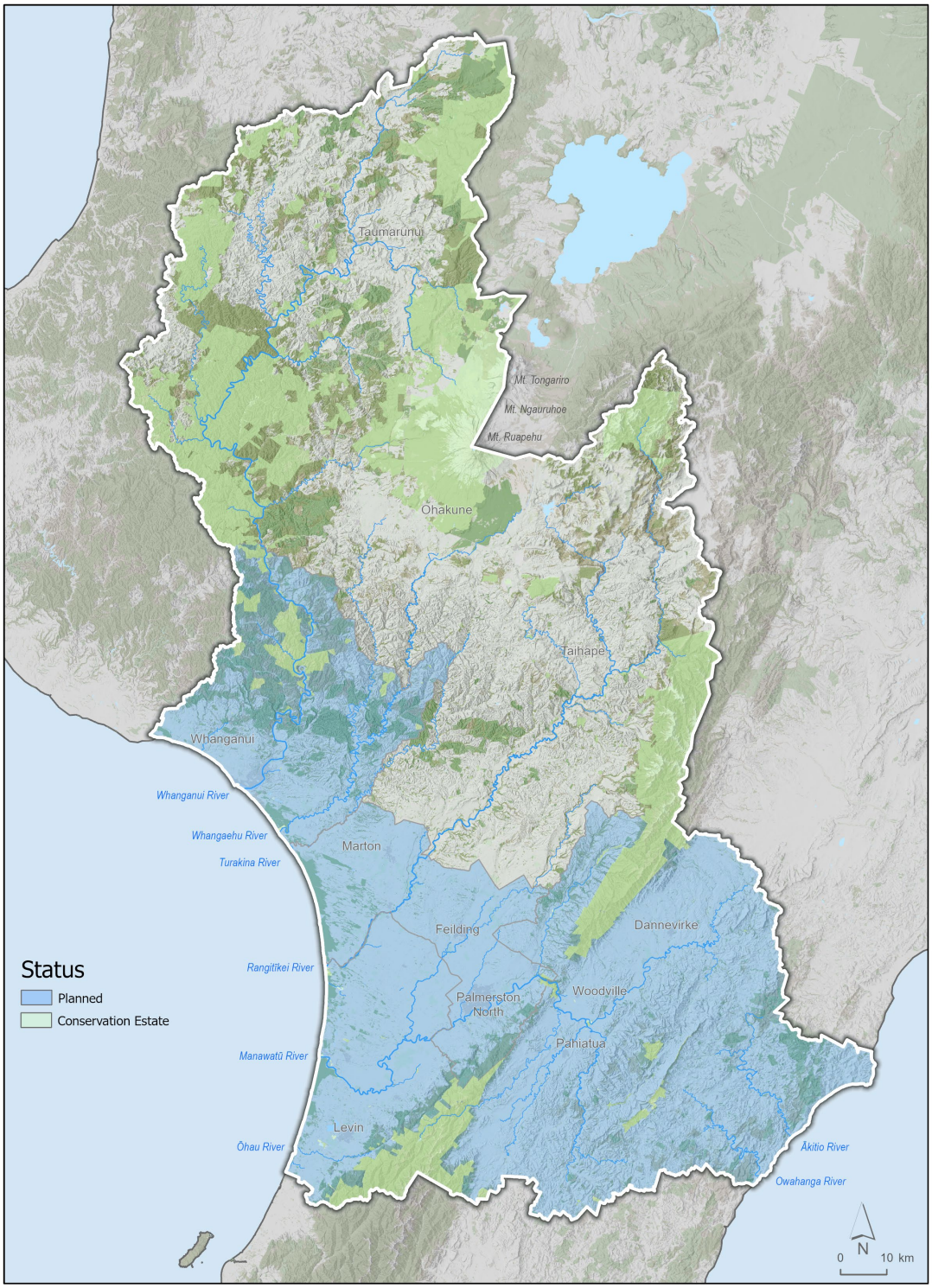
Alligator Weed 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



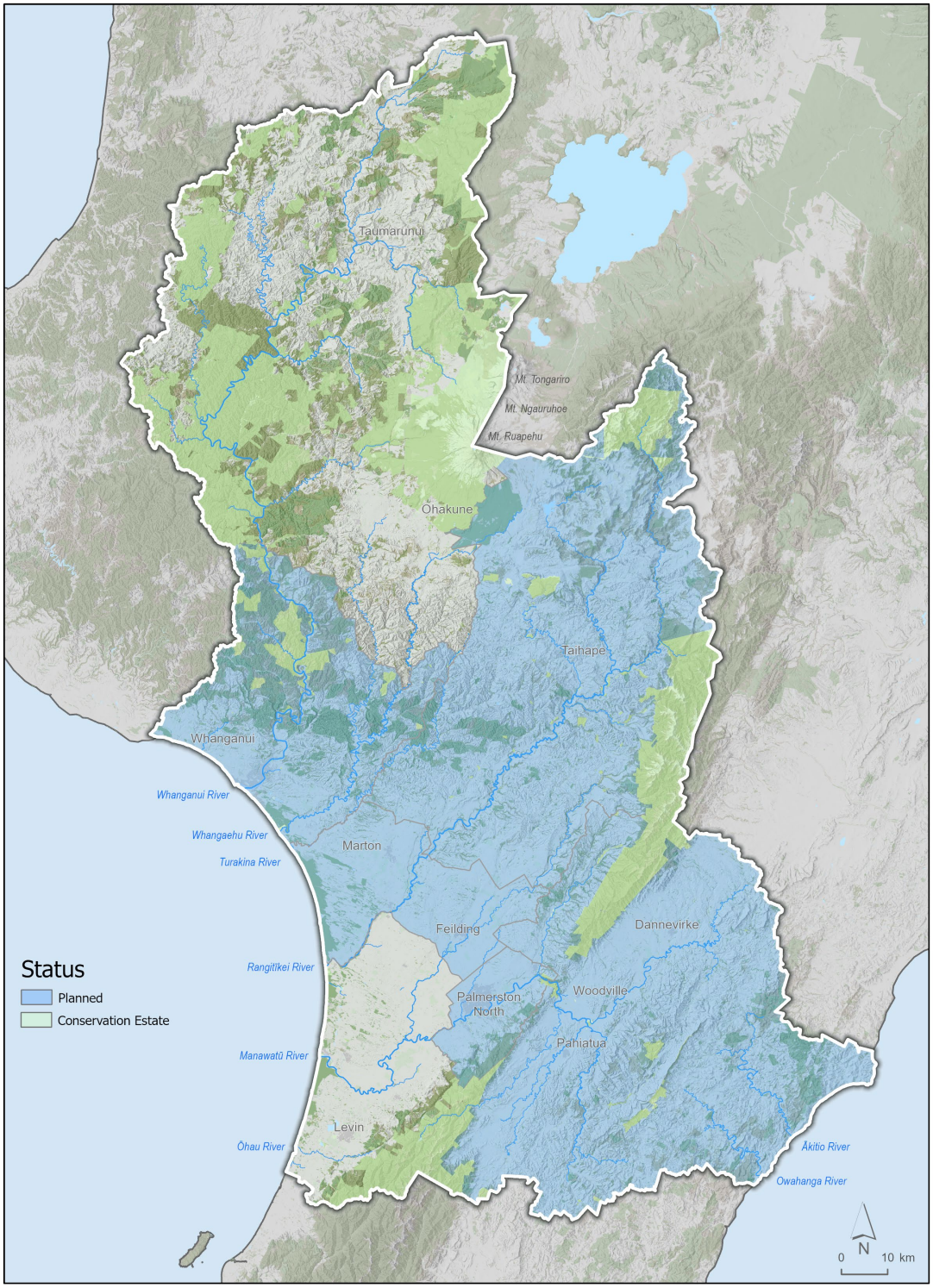
Arrowhead 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



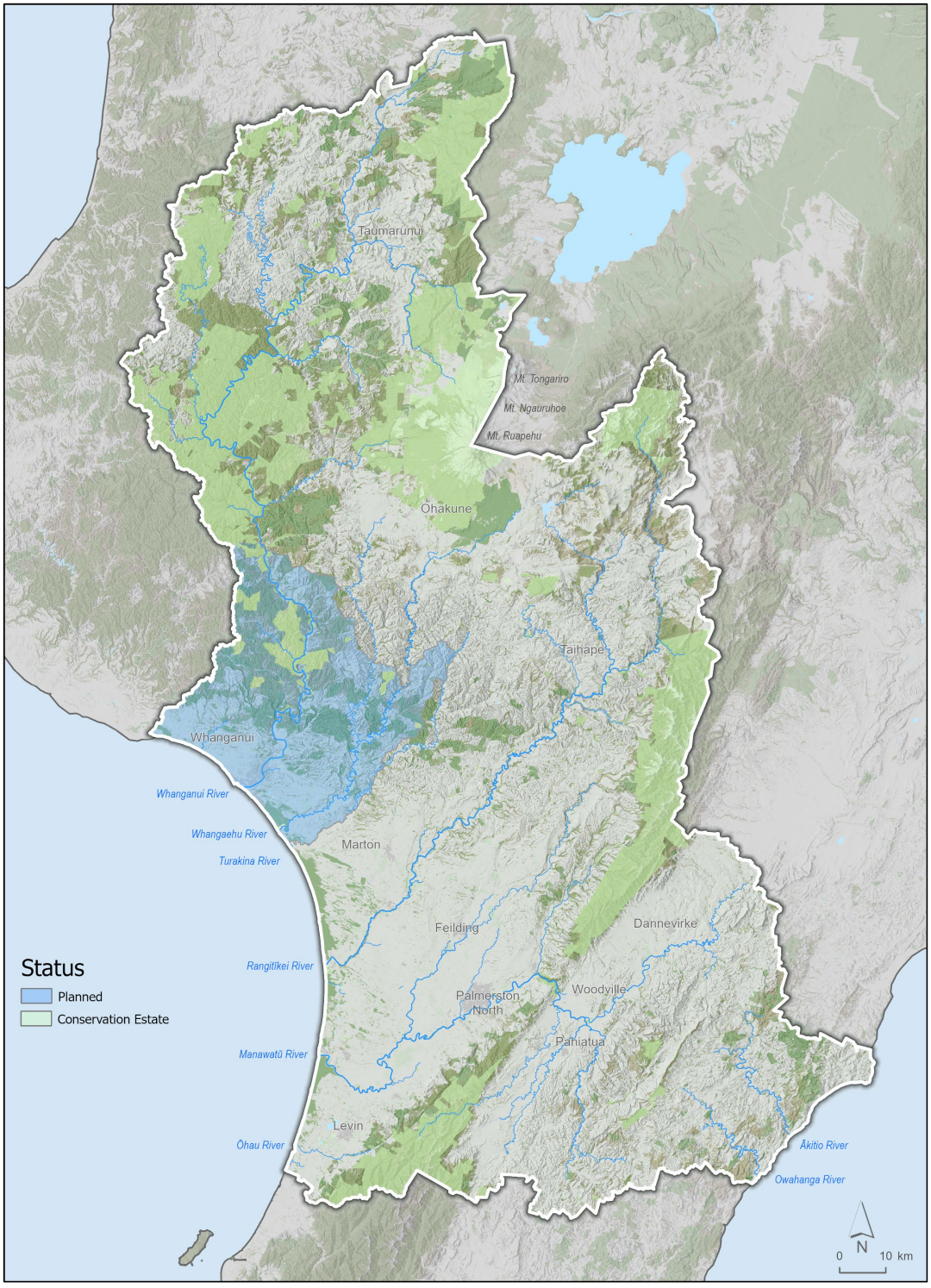
Blue Passion Flower 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



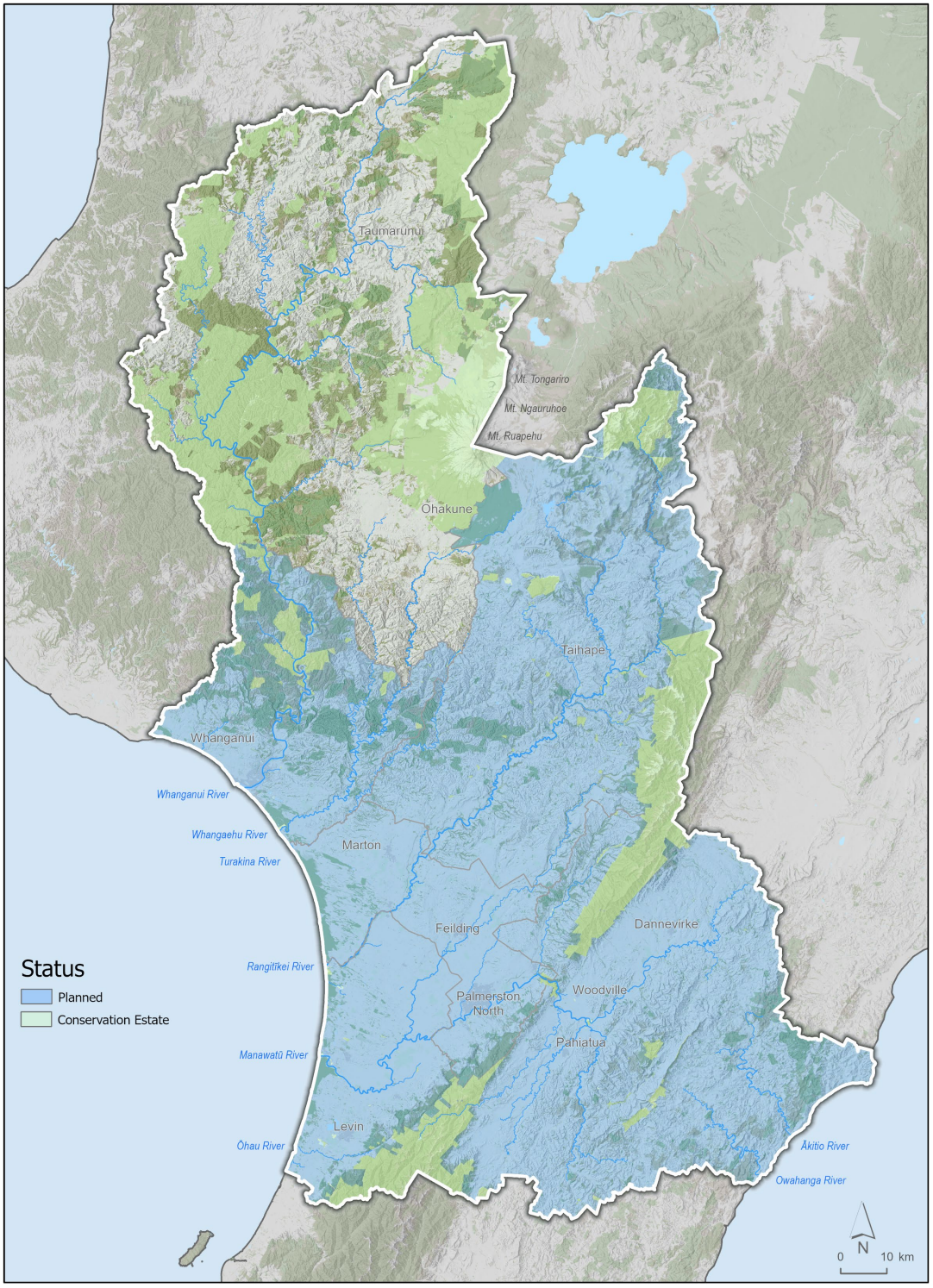
Cathedral Bells 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



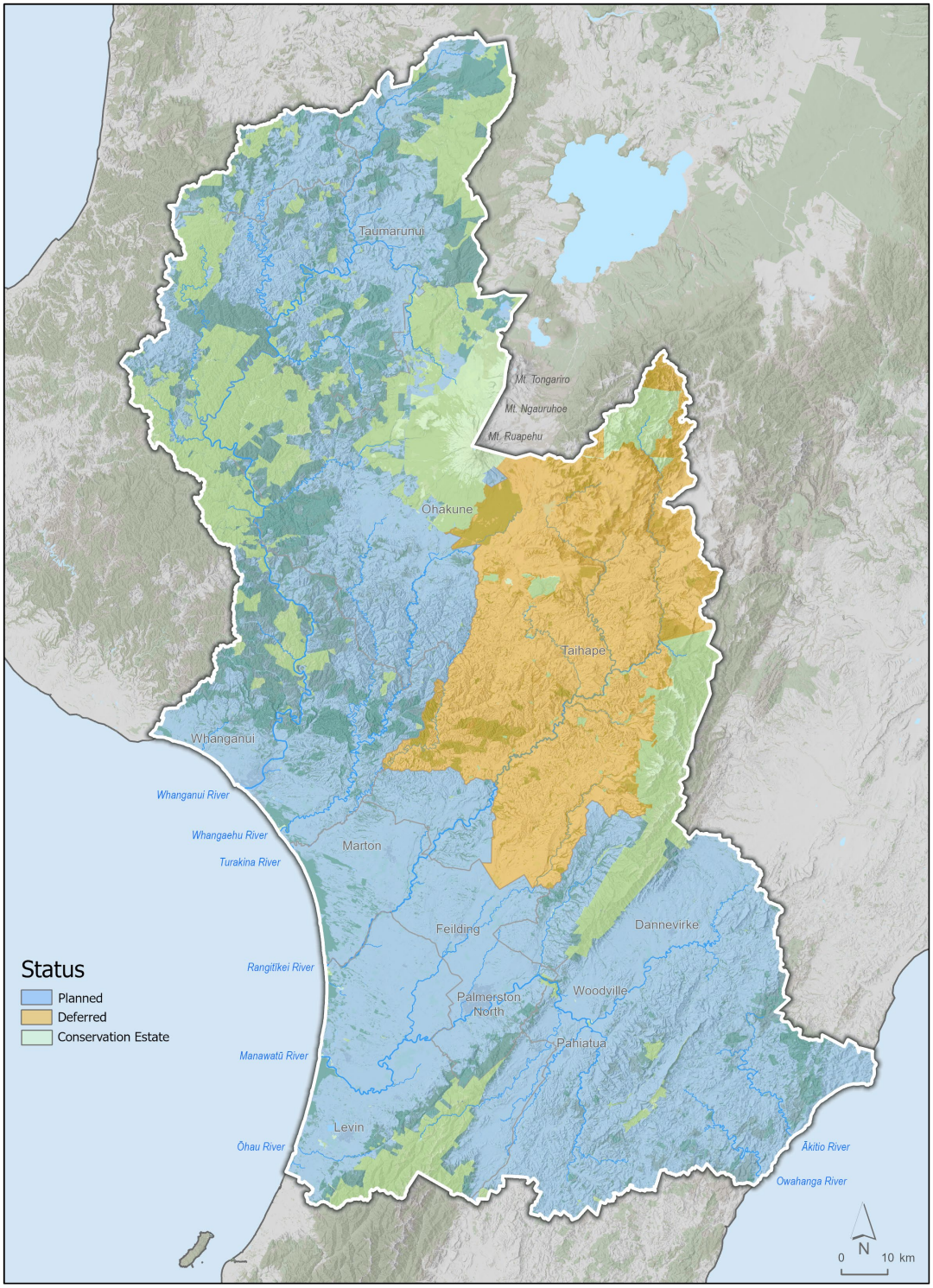
Chinese Pennisetum 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



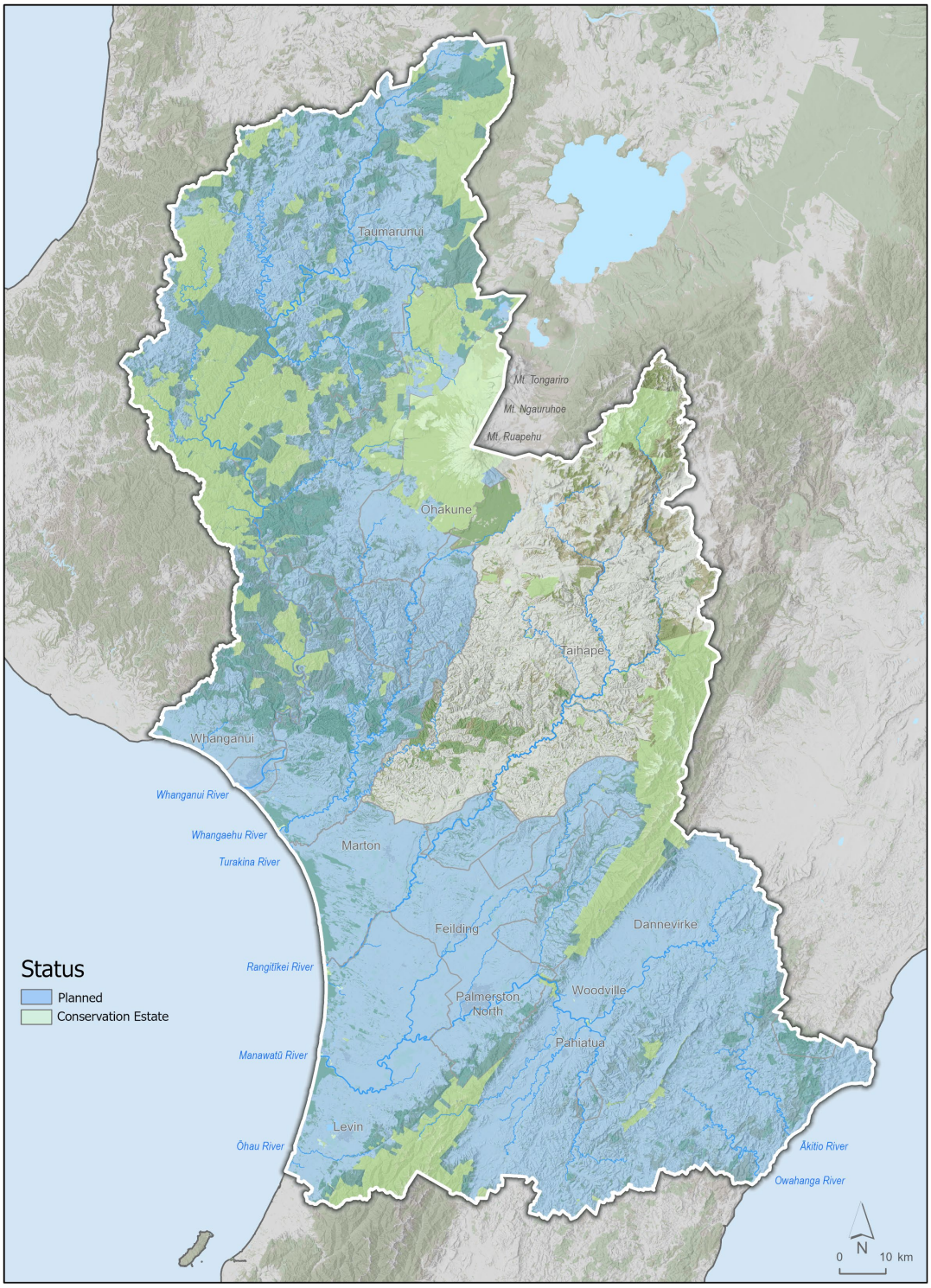
Climbing Alstroemeria 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



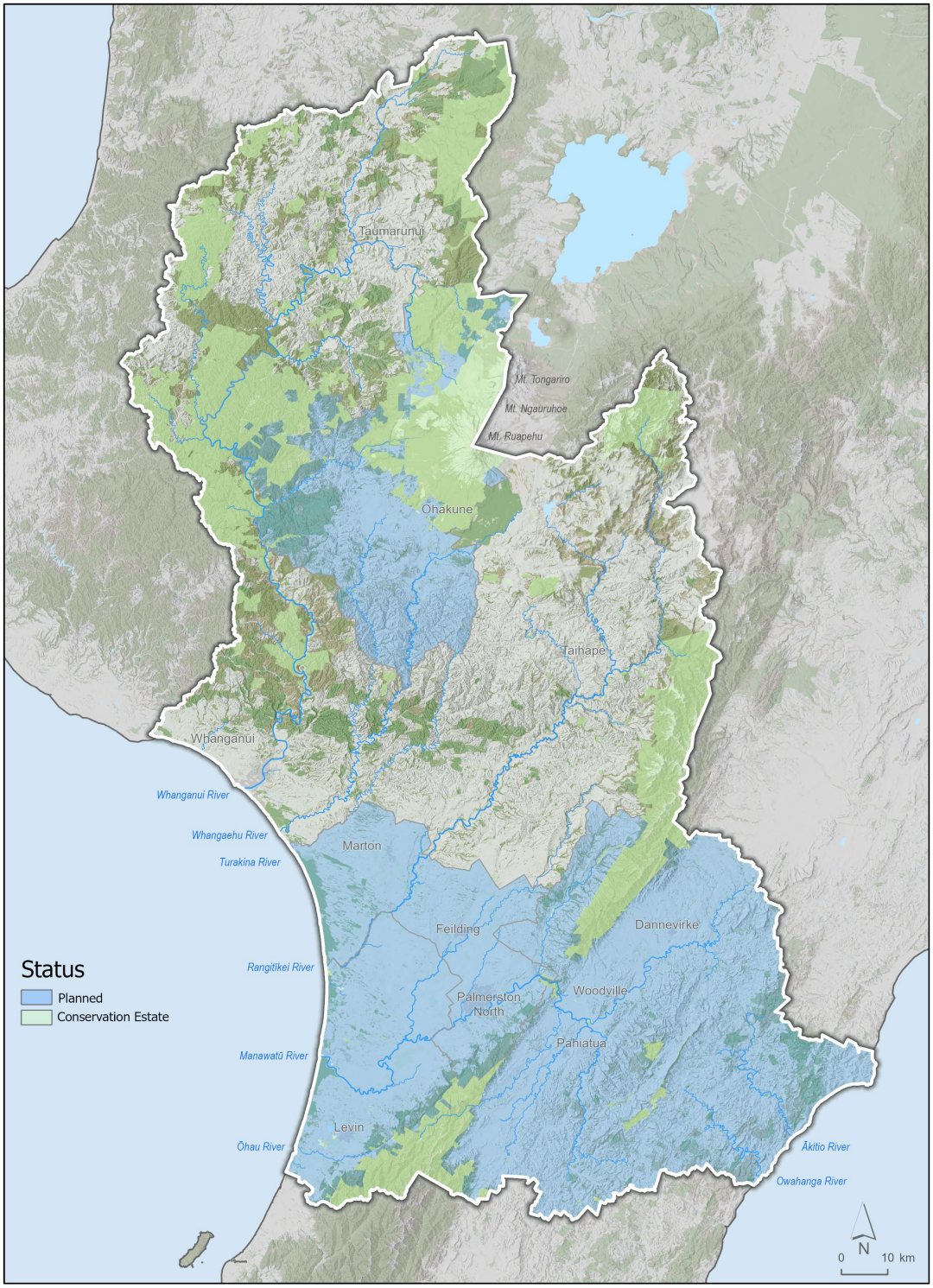
Climbing Spindleberry 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



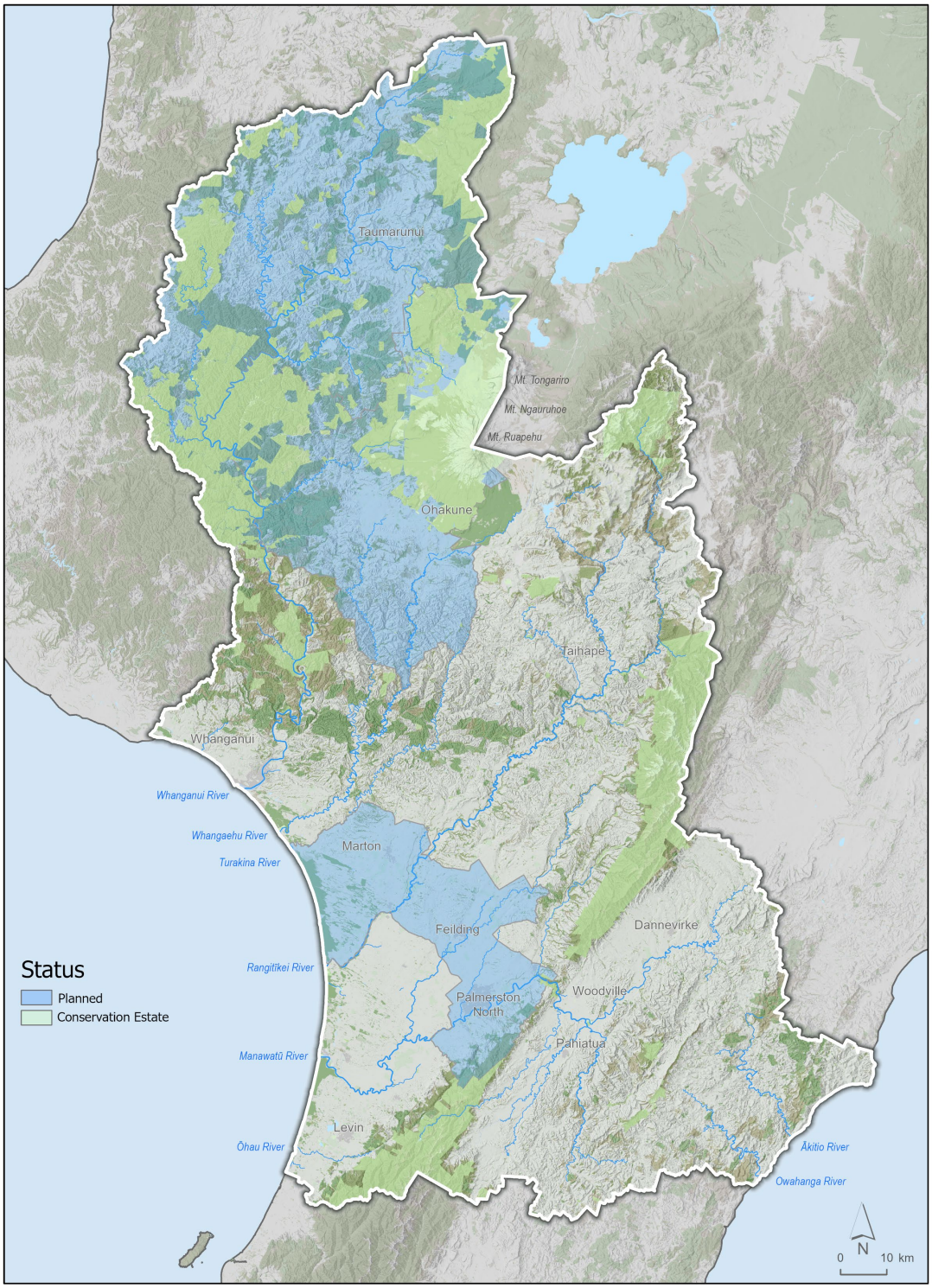
Chilean Rhubarb 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



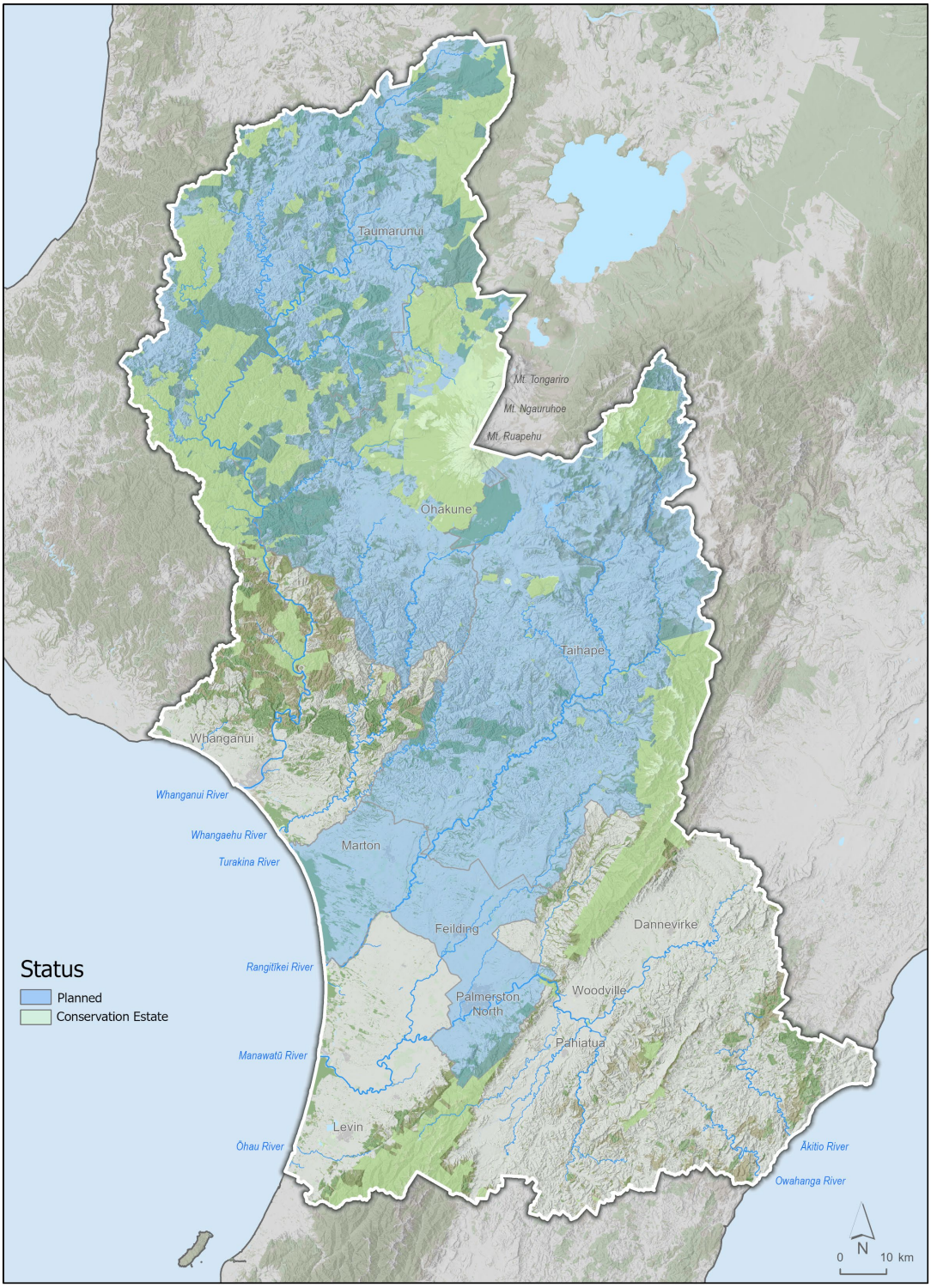
Himalayan Balsam 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



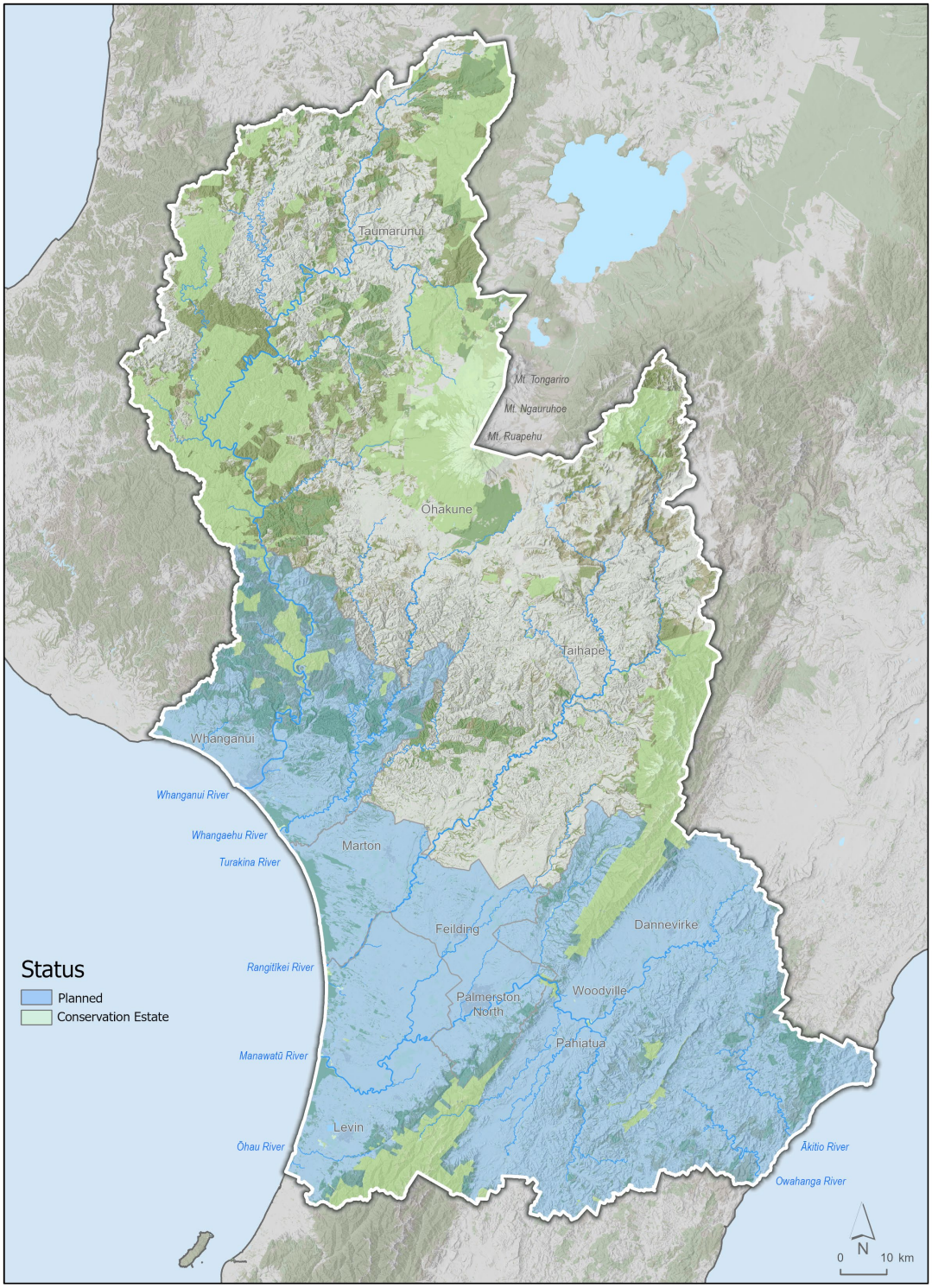
Knotweed 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



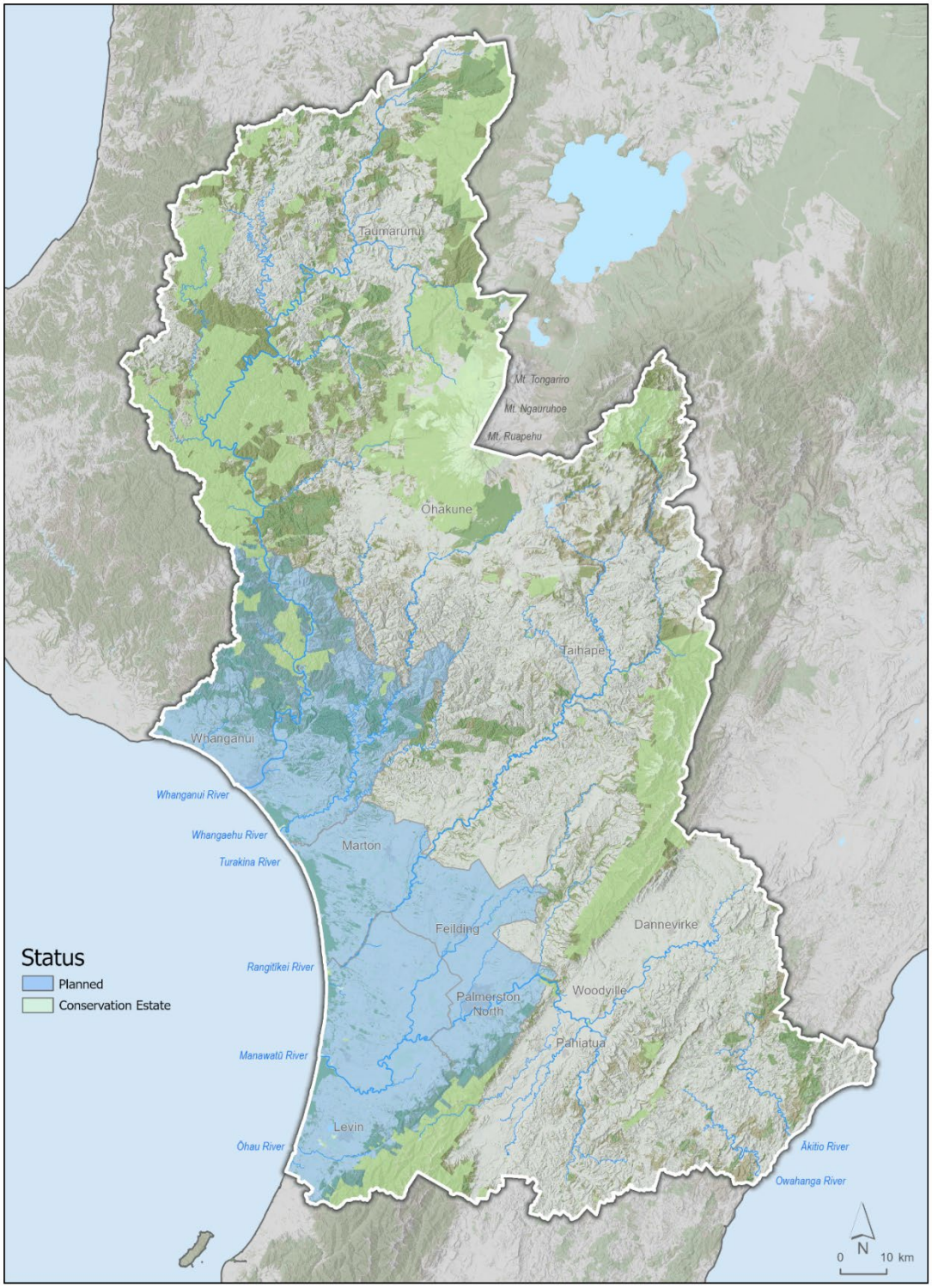
Nassella Tussock 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



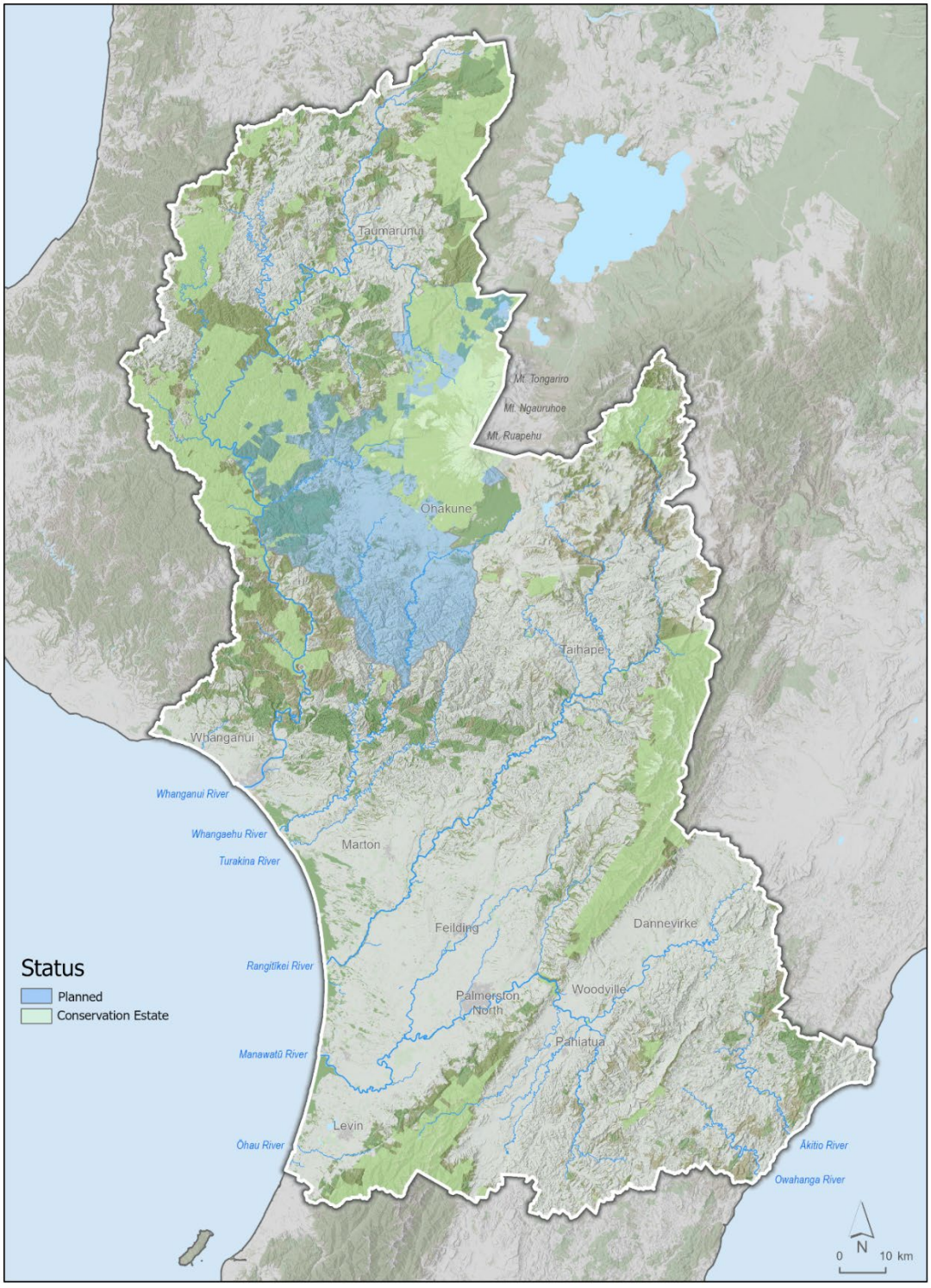
Purple Loosestrife 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



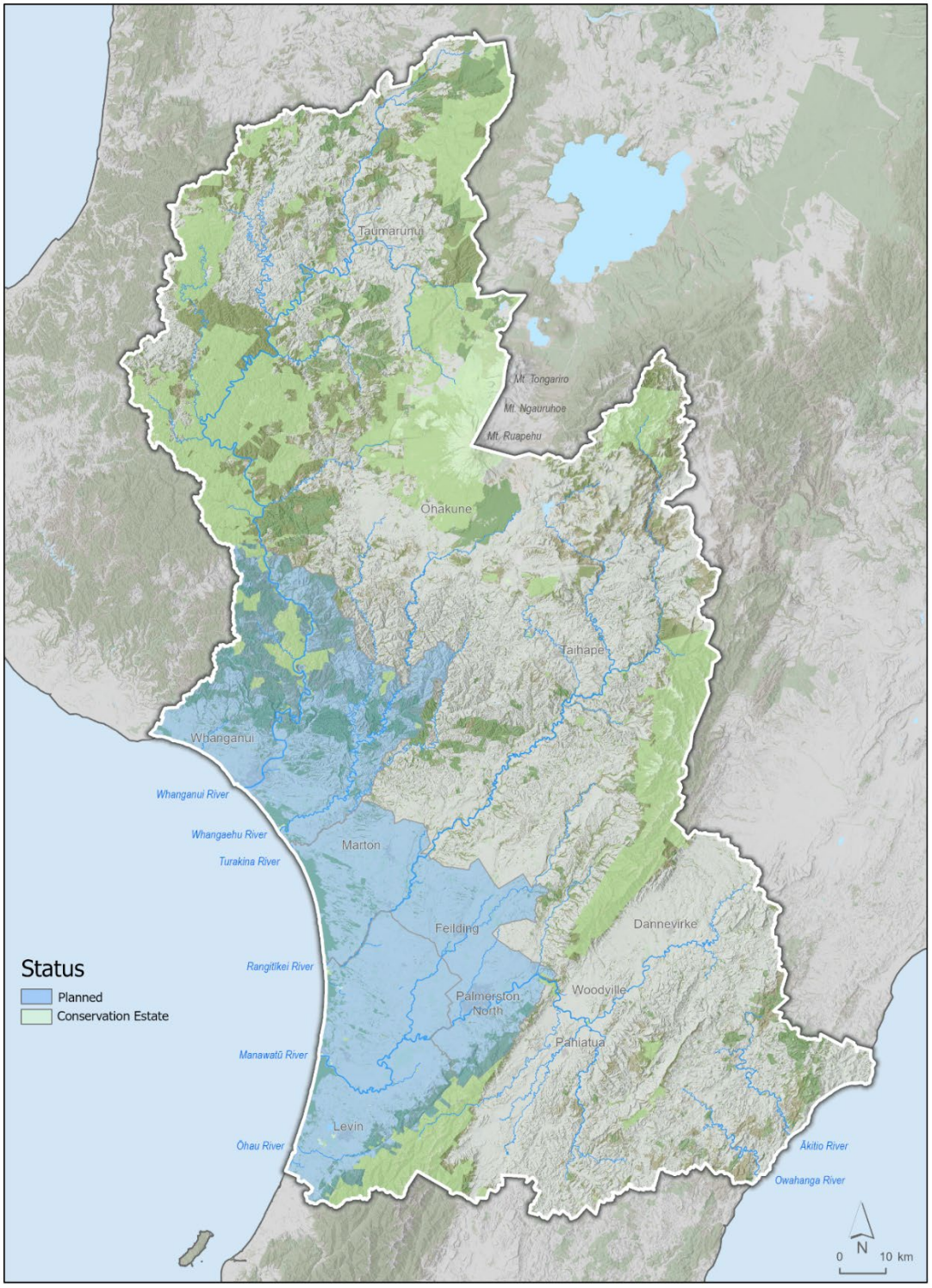
Queensland Poplar 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



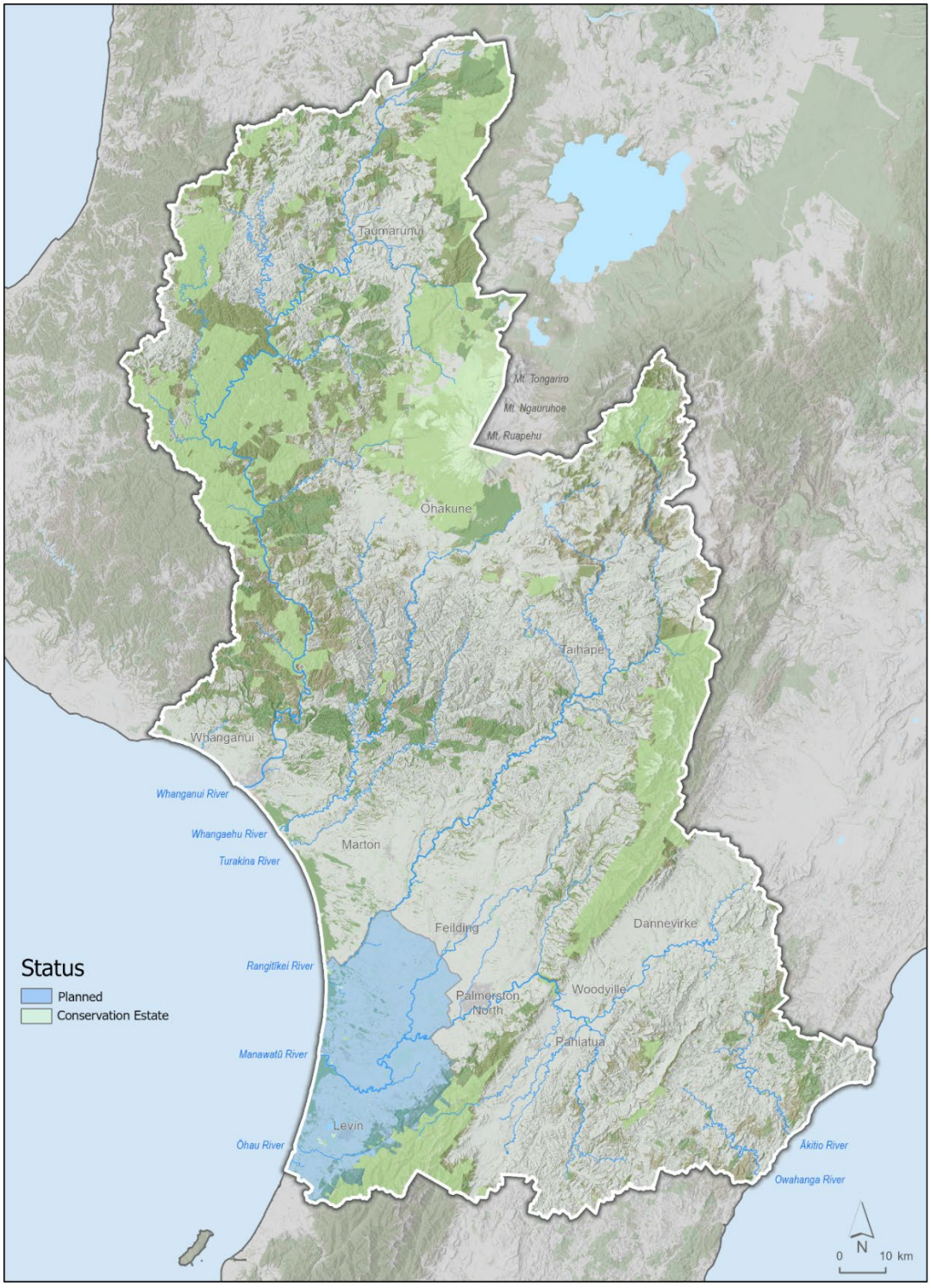
Rum Cherry 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



Senegal Tea 2026-2027

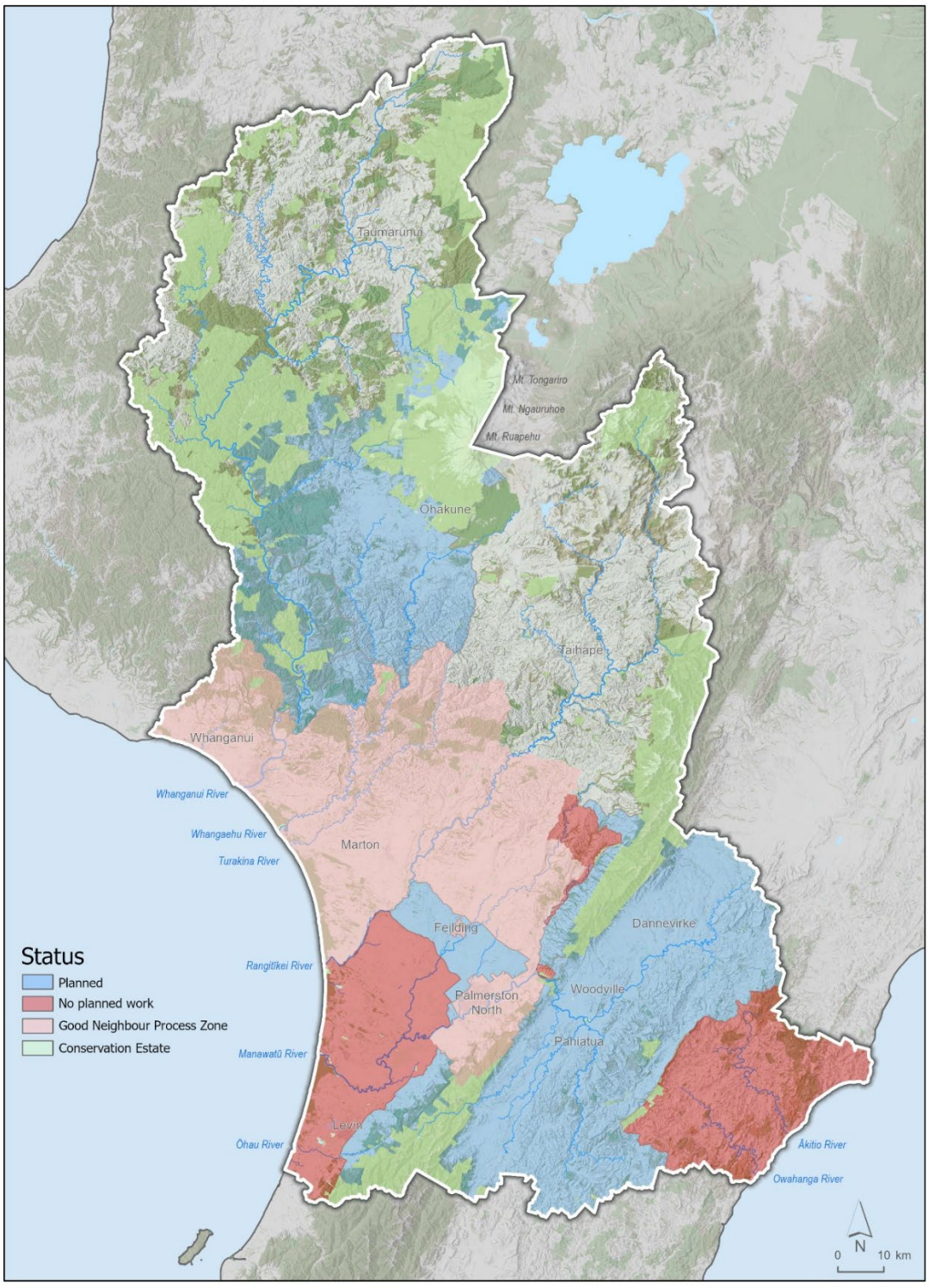
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Spartina 2026-2027

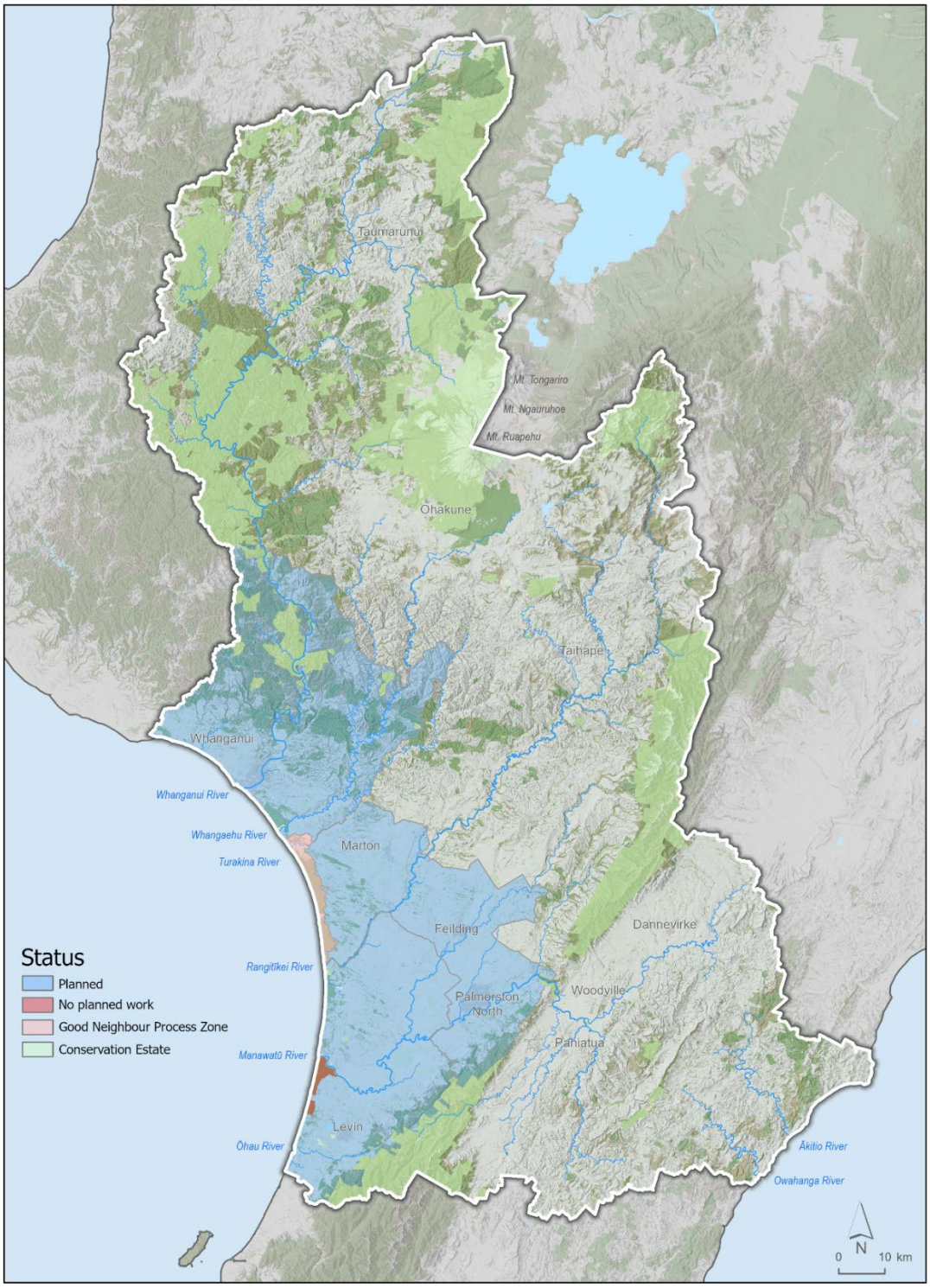
Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026

8.3 Species Management Unit Maps Progressive Containment Mapped Species



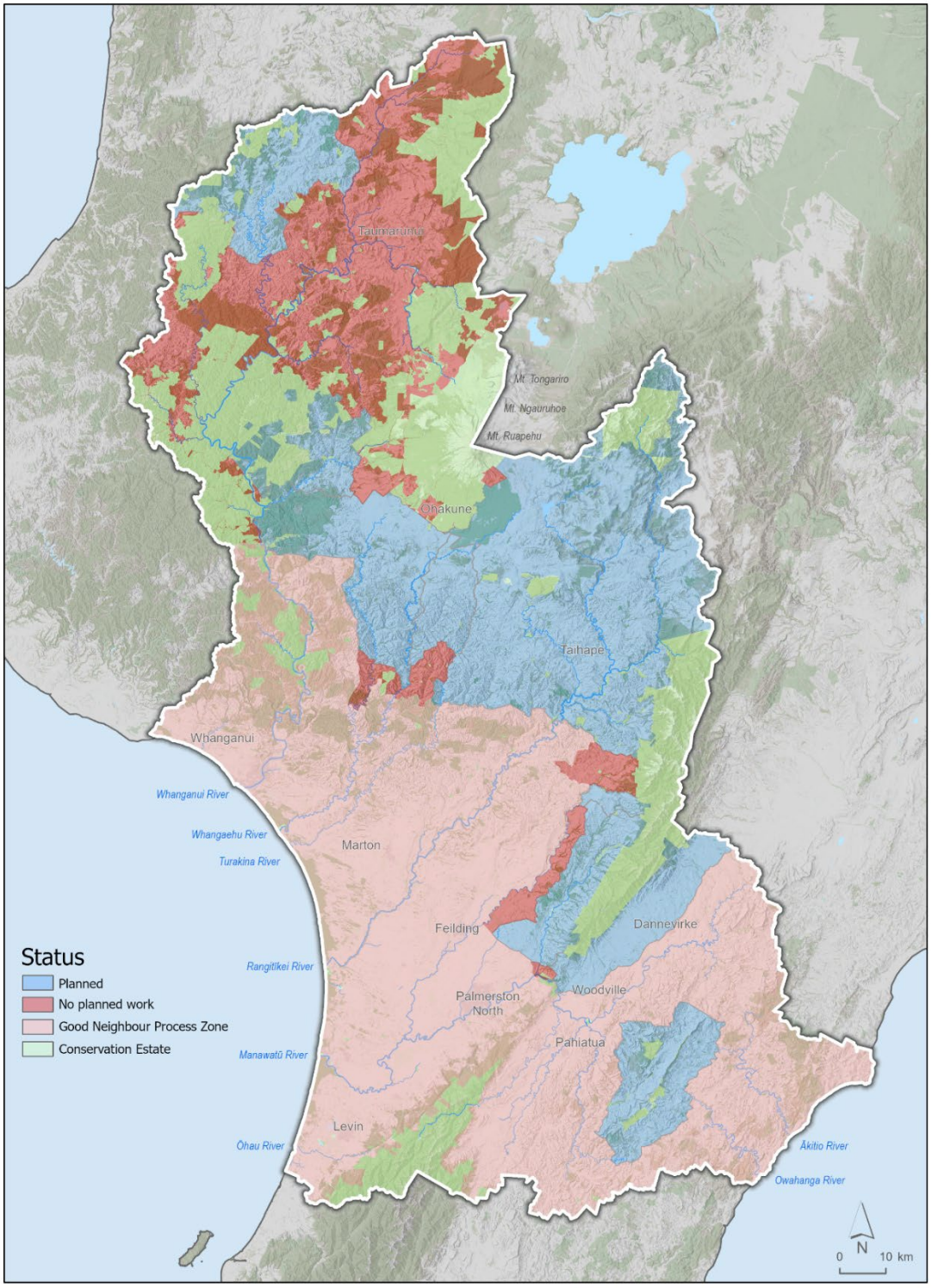
Banana Passionfruit 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



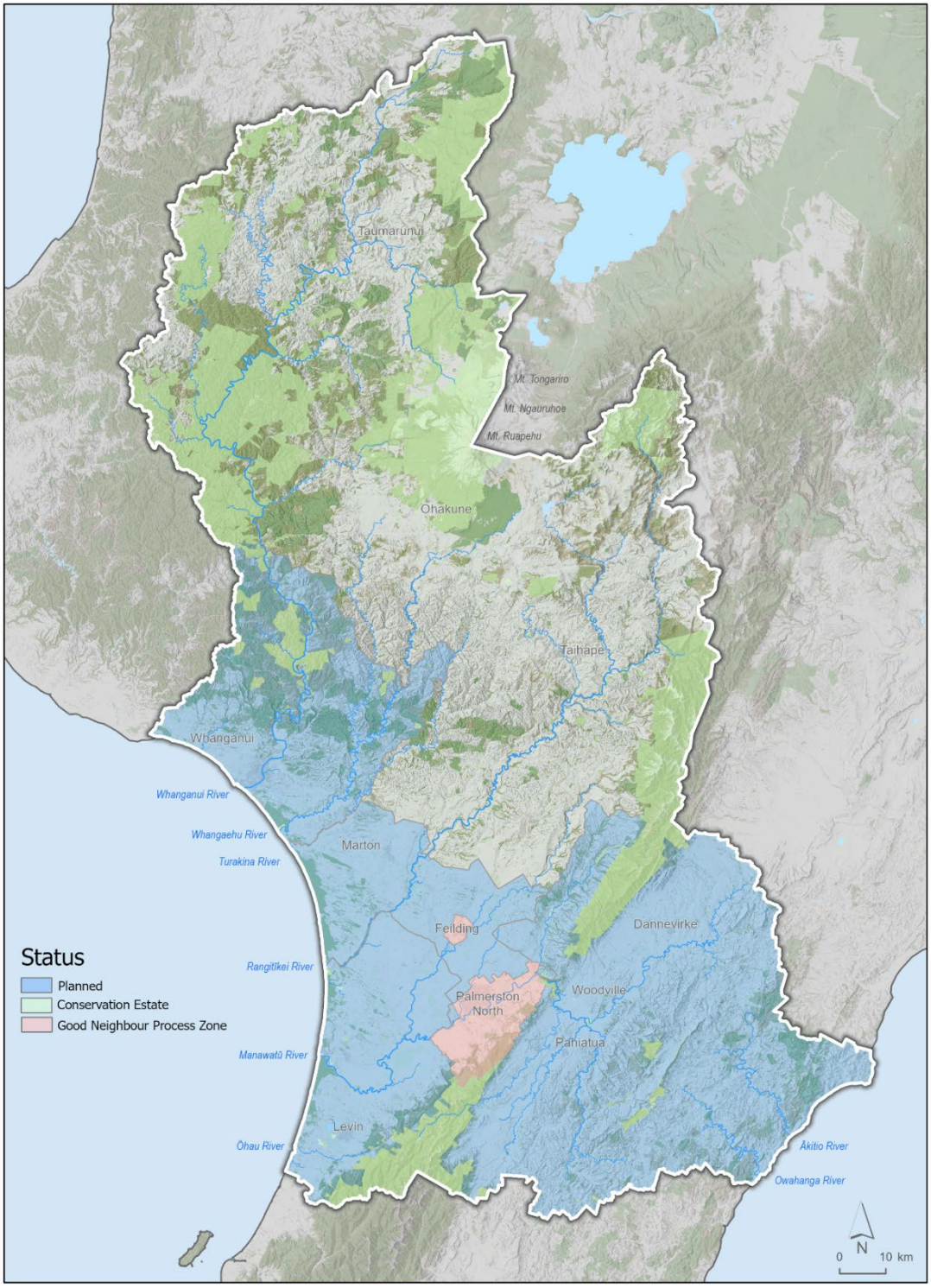
Boneseed 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



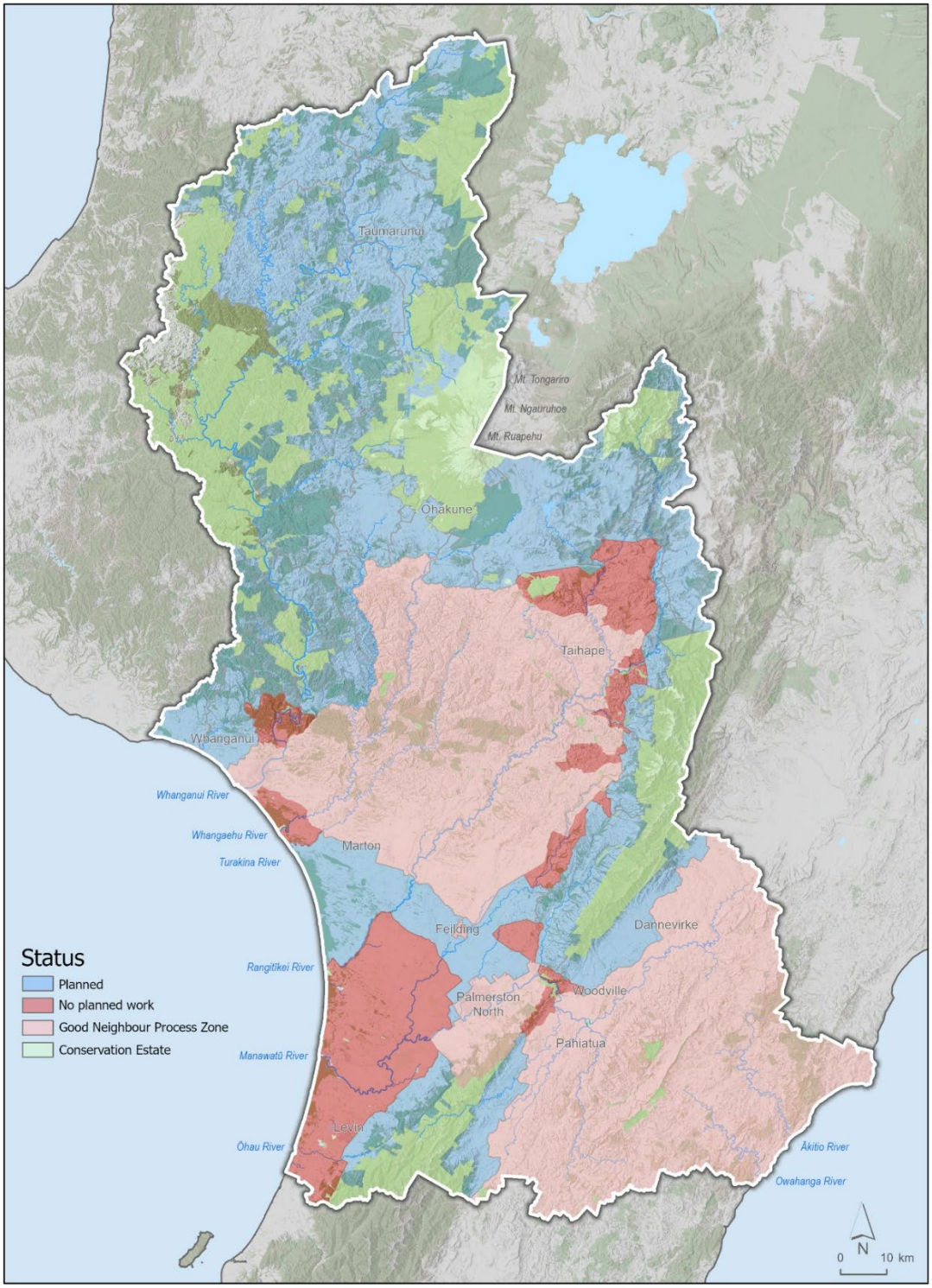
Darwin's Barberry 2026-2027

Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



Moth Plant 2026-2027

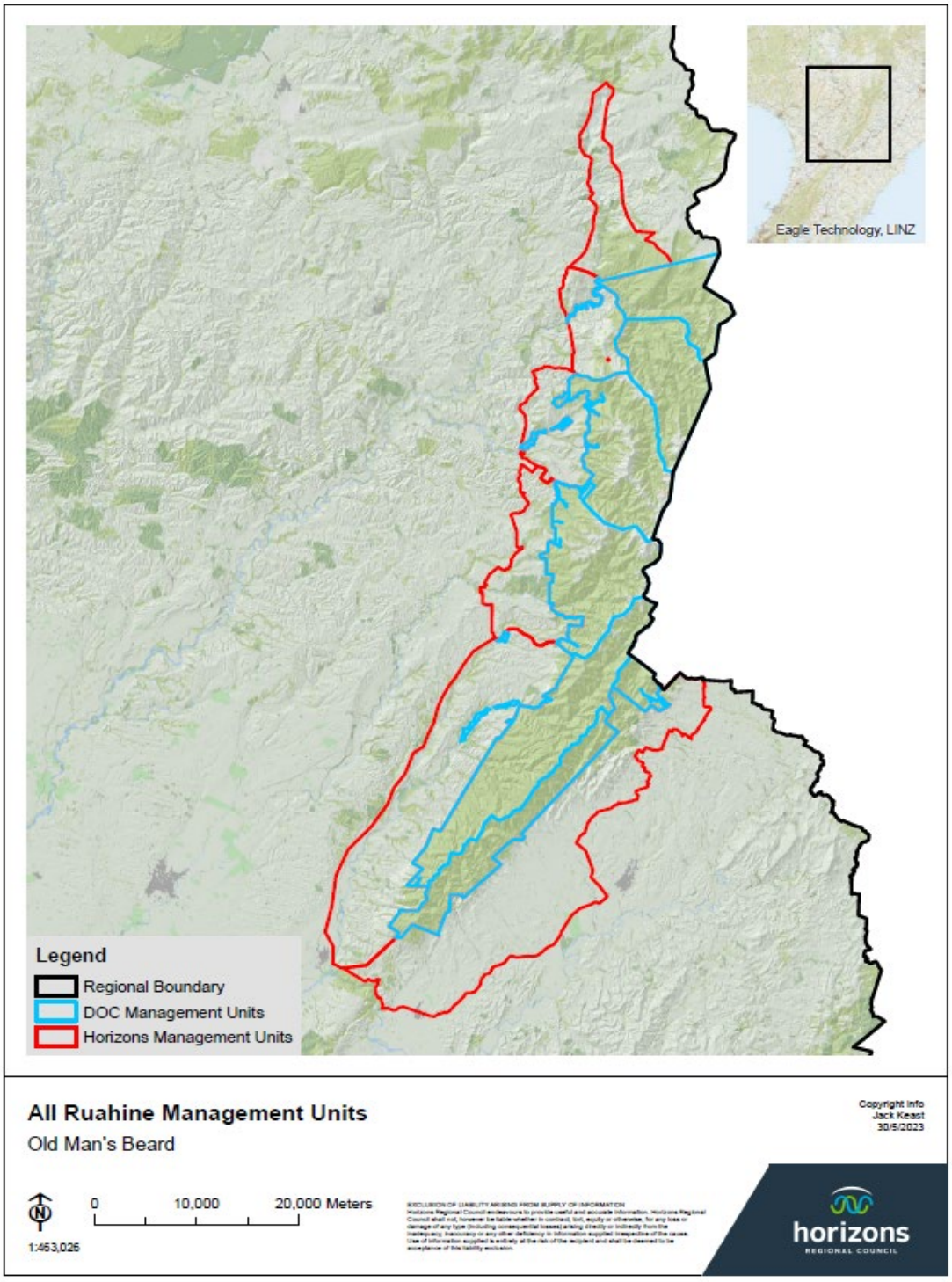
Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026



Old Man's Beard 2026-2027

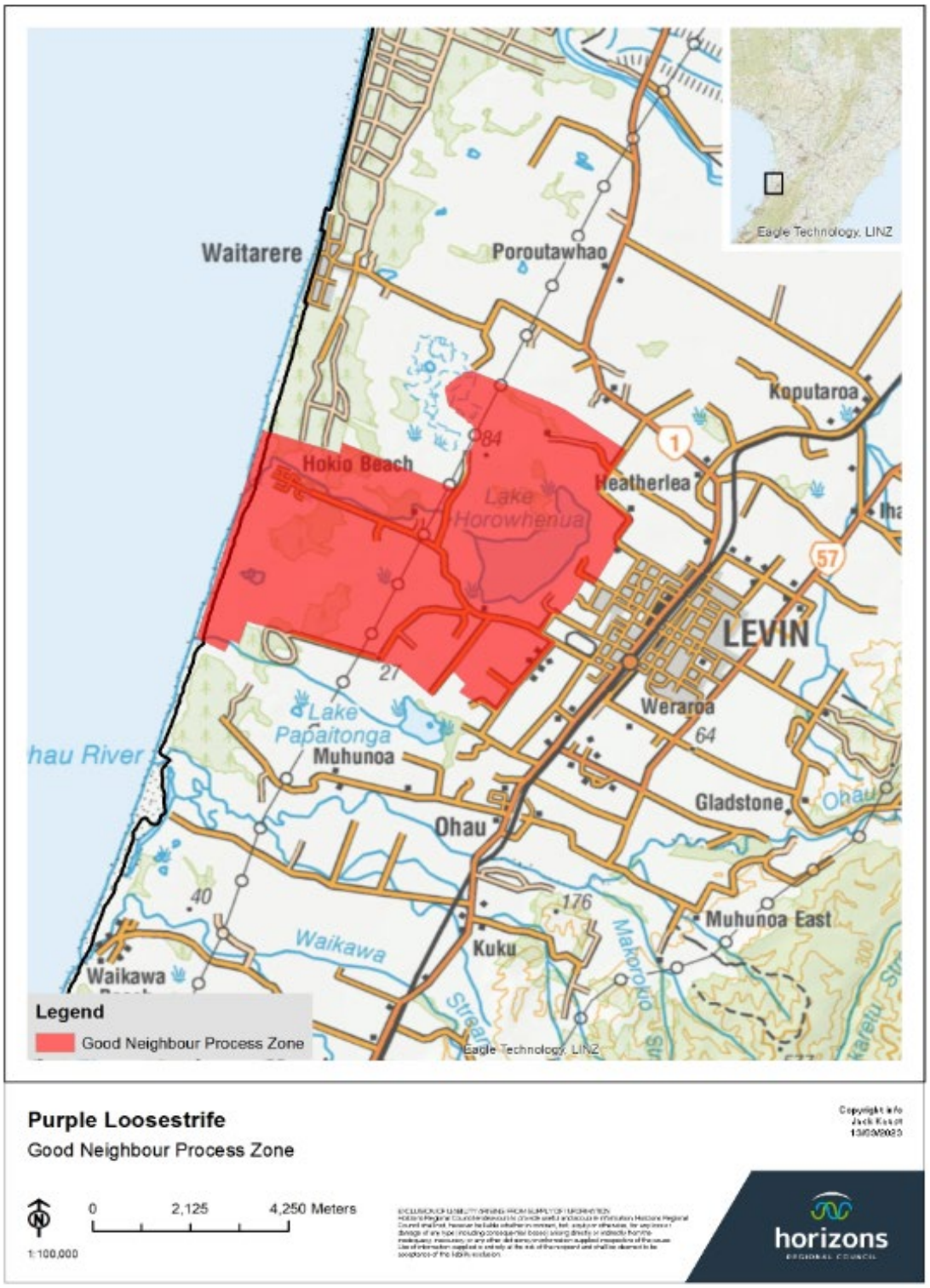
Prepared by: C Tregurtha-Nairn Date: 2/11/2026

8.4 Ruahine Forest Park old man's beard project map



Map 1: Management units for Ruahine Forest Park old man's beard programme

8.5 Purple loosestrife Progressive Containment zone



Map 2: Purple loosestrife Progressive Containment zone

8.6 Regional Pest Management Plan Exclusion plant register

Table 11 Exclusion plant register

Exclusion pest plant	Frequency (relates to live vectors)	Vector	Alertness score 1= low probability; 10= highly likely	Alert factors	Timeliness	Specific places	Secondary	Passive, Connected endeavours	Notes	Staff	Specific tasks
Californian bulrush	Ongoing coastal and one-off at treatment sites	Contaminated plants from Northland nurseries; coastal movement from Waikato rivers.	2	Previously known but eradicated, potential for coastal dispersal, nursery contamination low risk	Summer	Taumarunui settling ponds; Hunterville settling ponds. Estuaries of western coastline	West coast beaches	Whitebaiters and bird watchers	NPPA plant. Difficult to engage with folk over plant hard to id and tell apart from similar species.	Bash, Kelsi, Robbie	Consider building a 'what are you looking at…….. Flyer'
Chilean needle grass	Ongoing	Small risk of stock movement from Hawke's Bay to Horizons region.	7	Geolocation and movement of contractors, suppressed by Hawke's Bay Regional Council rules on known locations.	Nov-Feb	Contractor washdown yards i.e. the Hermitage, Tararua; Norserwood and Ormondville farmland. Levin meatworks paunch material site and discharge field.	All other areas during flowering season	Station owners	Vectors fairly well controlled by HBRC pest plan. However, post Cyclone Gabrielle, gravel can be extracted from Tukituki River. Potential for further range expansion of CNG	Jack, Malinda	Contact with HBRC staff about consent form for gravel, contractor biosecurity wash-down sheet and ute guides to be disseminated to contractors and landowners that have both land in HB and MW.
Noogoora burr	Ongoing	Ex BOP/Waikato via contractor machinery or feed	5	Geolocation and movement of contractors	Feb-March		Ruapehu cropping land		Find with seed pods before plant dies off in Autumn.	Bash, Kelsi	Staff to contact EBOP and WRC to assess spread potential. Social media posts to go up in November.
Saffron thistle	Ongoing	Human assisted via diggers, stock and feed. Ex Canterbury and Hawkes Bay.	7	Geolocation and movement of contractors and other vectors esp. roadside mowers.	Feb-April	Contractor wash-down yards i.e. The Hermitage, Tararua. Levin meatworks paunch material site and discharge field. Dannevirke saleyards		Hawkes Bay Regional Council staff	Likely near chicken coop/production areas	Jack, Malinda	Contact HBRC staff for spread risk assessment
Sweet pittosporum	Ongoing	Nurseries and plantings	1	Not presently known nearby	Sep-Feb		Old garden centres and urban areas		NPPA plant; white flowers and large orange fruit. Known only from Northland	Robbie, Kelsi	
Unknown/ MPI	Ongoing	Various - plant breeders, aquarium trade, gardeners, farmers.				Fly-tipping sites, abandoned nurseries, coastal access areas/dunes.				All	

8.7 Season activity and timeliness

Table 12 Surveillance activity by month when activity starts

Month	Incursion	Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive containment - mapped	Progressive containment un-mapped	Biological control	Investigation	Promotion
July			Woolly nightshade		Report on AMPs			
August			Alligator Weed (PN)	Darwin's barberry, boneseed	Sign off 2026-27 AMPs			Woollybusters
September	Velvet leaf - Farmer contact	Site visits	Spartina, Blue passionflower, knotweed, alligator weed (PN)	Banana passionfruit, pest conifers, Darwin's barberry				CCD – Lake O, Woollybusters
October	Sea spurge site visits	Site visits	Cathedral bells, alligator weed (PN)	Banana passionfruit, Darwins barberry		NBC meeting, Chilean flame creeper release, Sydney golden wattle wasp drone flight, purple loosestrife releases		CCD, Chilean needle grass
November		Sagittaria surveillance around flowering	Chilean rhubarb, Senegal tea, rum cherry alligator weed (PN) (TMN), arrowhead	Moth plant, banana passionfruit	Site audits	purple loosestrife releases		CCD
December		Site visits	Nasella, Himalyan balsam, alligator weed (PN)	Old man's beard, moth plant	Site audits	Broom gall mite distribution and site monitoring, field horsetail weevil monitoring, purple loosestrife releases		CCD, weed wizard videos
January		Site visits	African feather grass, Chinese *pennisetum*, alligator weed (PN, TMN)	Old man's beard	Site audits	Tradescantia monitoring and distribution, purple loosestrife releases		CCD
February	Velvetleaf paddock surveillance Sea Spurge site visits	Site visits, fringed water lily visits	Purple loosestrife, Alligator Weed (PN), climbing spindleberry	Old man's beard	Site audits	old man's beard sawfly releases, purple loosestrife releases		CCD
March		Site visits	Cathedral bells, alligator weed (PN, TMN), bomarea	Old man's beard	Site audits	purple loosestrife releases		CCD, weed wizard videos
April			Alligator weed (PN), Queensland poplar	Banana passionfruit				CCD
May			Alligator Weed (PN)	Banana passionfruit				
June	Sea spurge site visits		Woolly nightshade		AMP reports due			

horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL

horizons.govt.nz

24 hour freephone 0508 800 800
fax 06 952 2929 | **email** help@horizons.govt.nz
Private Bag 11025, Manawatu Mail Centre, Palmerston North 4442