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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Heading**

Tony and Jane McNeilly of Seaspray have been 'planting for the future'; at least that is how they describe it. Farmers have long recognised the value of trees on farms and when Gippsland Private Forestry Inc (GPF) offered to assist the McNeilly's in establishing a commercial tree crop they decided it was an opportunity too good to refuse.

"It was a good opportunity for Jane and I to think about the overall farm layout and how to incorporate trees to protect our stock. Planning, good preparation and weed control was the message these blokes from GPF kept repeating." said Tony McNeilly.

Gippsland Private Forestry provides funds to landowners seeking to establish alternative eucalypt species plantations through an initiative known as the Indigenous Species Plantation (ISP) project. Participating landowners contribute towards the cost of their plantation, with GPF providing technical and some financial assistance. The ISP project is part of a West Gippsland Farm Forestry Project funded by the National Heritage Trust. The project aims to demonstrate the commercial growing of eucalypts as a viable alternative landuse.

The McNeilly's fenced and prepared around 10ha ready to plant 10 000 trees. "In the scheme of things 10ha is not much to set aside for tree planting, but when all these tree turned up ready for planting I thought what have I let myself in for' said Tony.

GPF provided planting tools called 'Pottiputki's', and with some assistance from family members the McNeilly's had all 10 000 trees in the ground within a few days.

"The process of successfully establishing trees in the ground takes several months of planning and preparing the site, and should be completed early in the year' said John Davenport, Gippsland Private Forestry's Extension Officer for West Gippsland. "Standard farm equipment, a good tractor and spray gear are often sufficient to perform the job, and this helps minimise costs." said John.

"You could almost run a string line down those rows and fences. The effort the McNeilly's have made is a credit to them both", John said.

"Successful establishment of trees on farm will help heal the catchment, offset carbon dioxide emissions from farms and improve sustainable management practices. We hope more farmers in the district will follow Tony and Jane's example "John concluded.

Gippsland Private Forestry is currently inviting landowners to express interest in participating in the 2006 ISP project, with planting scheduled for winter 2006.

Further information about the project can be obtained by phoning John Davenport at the West Gippsland CMA office in Traralgon on 51757837.

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*Promoting sustainable, commercial private forestry development in Gippsland*

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