



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gulf Islands  
National Seashore

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## Gulf Islands News Release

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### Park Entrance Fees Suspended in Honor of Rosamond Johnson

Gulf Breeze, Fla. – At the request of Park Superintendent Brown, the National Park Service South Atlantic-Gulf Regional Director has approved a fee suspension for the first Saturday of May from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in honor of the sacrifice paid by Rosamond Johnson and his family. The entrance fee suspension will cover all park areas and will be in place until there is a change in park leadership or the entrance fee rate. In those instances, a new request would need to be made.

After enlisting in the US Army at 15, Johnson died in combat two years later on the Korean Peninsula. While engaged with the enemy, on July 26, 1950, Private Johnson carried two wounded soldiers to safety. He was fatally wounded while attempting to save a third wounded man. On August 21, 1950, Rosamond was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart for wounds he sustained while saving his fellow soldiers.

At the time of his death, Pensacola beaches were racially segregated. The Sunset Riding Club, Inc. leased a county owned recreational area in 1950 for the sole use of bathing and recreational facilities for “colored citizens.” In honor of his ultimate sacrifice, and in recognition as the first Escambia County resident to die in the Korean Conflict, the recreational area became known as Rosamond Johnson Beach. The area became part of Gulf Islands National Seashore in 1971, and the name was retained. Today, a monument and exhibit honor Private Johnson and his service.

On the first Saturday in May each year, the National Park Service is proud to partner with Escambia County, the Perdido Key Chamber of Commerce, and Florida Black Chamber of Commerce in honoring Private Rosamond Johnson. Johnson Beach is one of the most popular beach recreation areas of the national seashore and is open daily from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

“Johnson Beach is an incredibly special place and the annual commemoration acknowledging the beach’s namesake is one of the most important events to be held in the park,” said Superintendent Dan Brown. “Ensuring that all are able to attend this important ceremony each year has been a top priority of the park, and we are thankful this suspension has been approved.”

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“We are very thankful to Superintendent Dan Brown and his team for their efforts,” said Escambia County District Two Commissioner Doug Underhill. “The National Park Service is not only a steward of our natural resources, but of the human stories and heritage that are as much a part of this land as the dunes and bayous. The Perdido Key Chamber of Commerce has worked hard to memorialize the sacrifice of the Johnson Family, every year. This development will enable them to reach out to a larger audience every year with the stories of a great American son.”

In addition to Johnson Beach at the Perdido Key Area, entrance fees at Opal Beach and the Fort Pickens, Fort Barrancas, and Okaloosa Areas will also be free during the suspension period. Fee suspensions may only be authorized by the NPS Regional Director, the Secretary of the Interior, or the President.

*About Gulf Islands National Seashore: Created in 1971, the national seashore stretches 160 miles along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico in Florida and Mississippi, and includes barrier islands, maritime forests, historic forts, bayous, and marine habitat. Visit us at [www.nps.gov/guis](http://www.nps.gov/guis), on Facebook [www.facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS](http://www.facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS), Twitter [www.twitter.com/GulfIslands\\_NPS](http://www.twitter.com/GulfIslands_NPS), and Instagram [www.Instagram.com/GulfIslandsNPS](http://www.Instagram.com/GulfIslandsNPS).*

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