



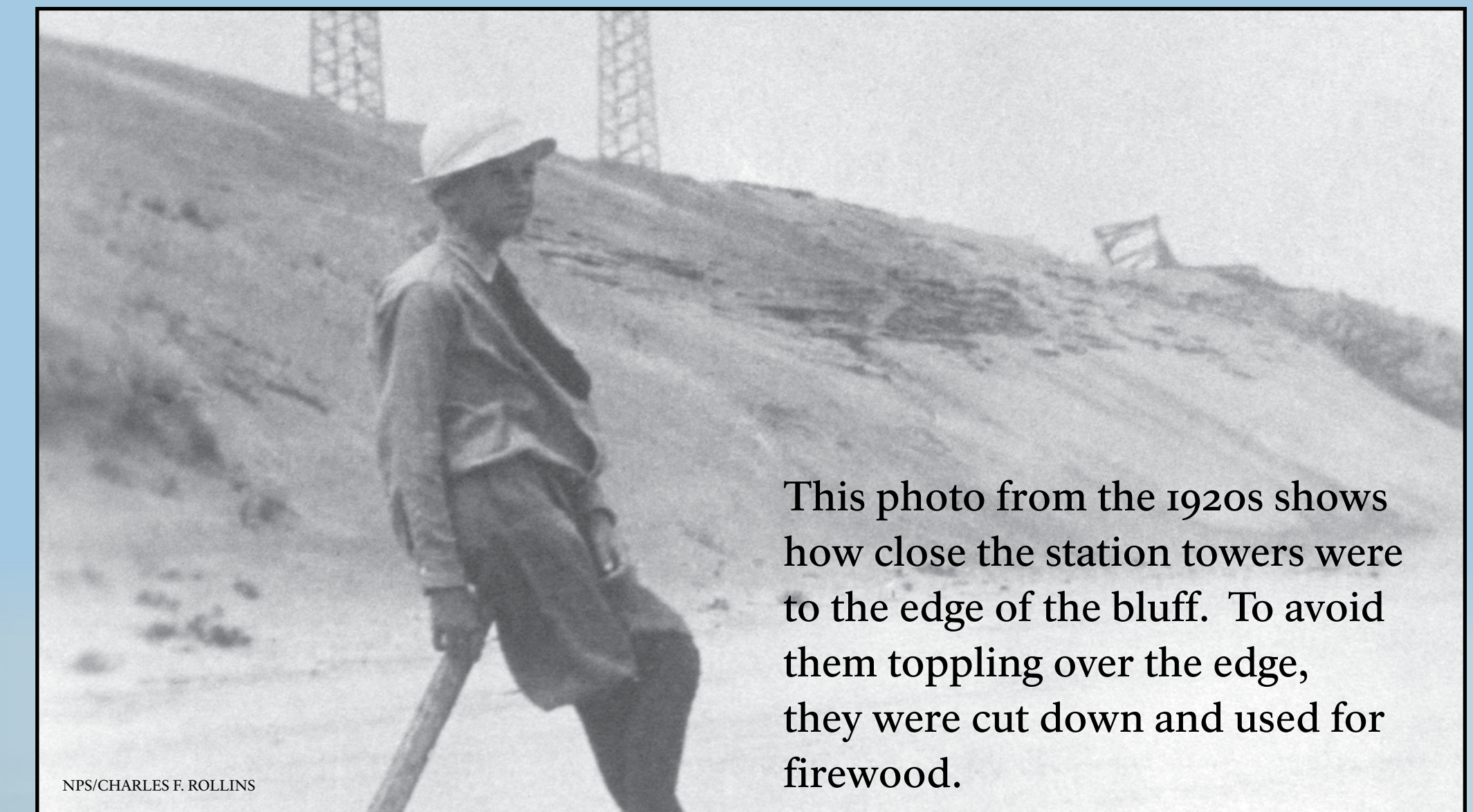
The Outer Cape: Changing Faster Than Technology

Technological innovation constantly reshapes our experience of the world — in less than a century, we advanced from wireless telegraph to wireless internet. On Cape Cod, the North Atlantic Ocean is a powerful force for change to the landscape.

In 1917, just 16 years after Guglielmo Marconi built the South Wellfleet wireless station, it was shuttered. New inventions were beginning to make the technology at this station obsolete, but the very ground on which the station stood faced a more imminent threat.

Every year on average, the Outer Cape loses about three feet of upland bluffs due to the natural process of erosion. Strong winter winds scour the face of the dunes, and waves strike the beach every six seconds, dragging sand into the water and redepositing it elsewhere.

The site where Marconi's station once stood is now gone. How long until the ground beneath your feet is claimed by the ocean?



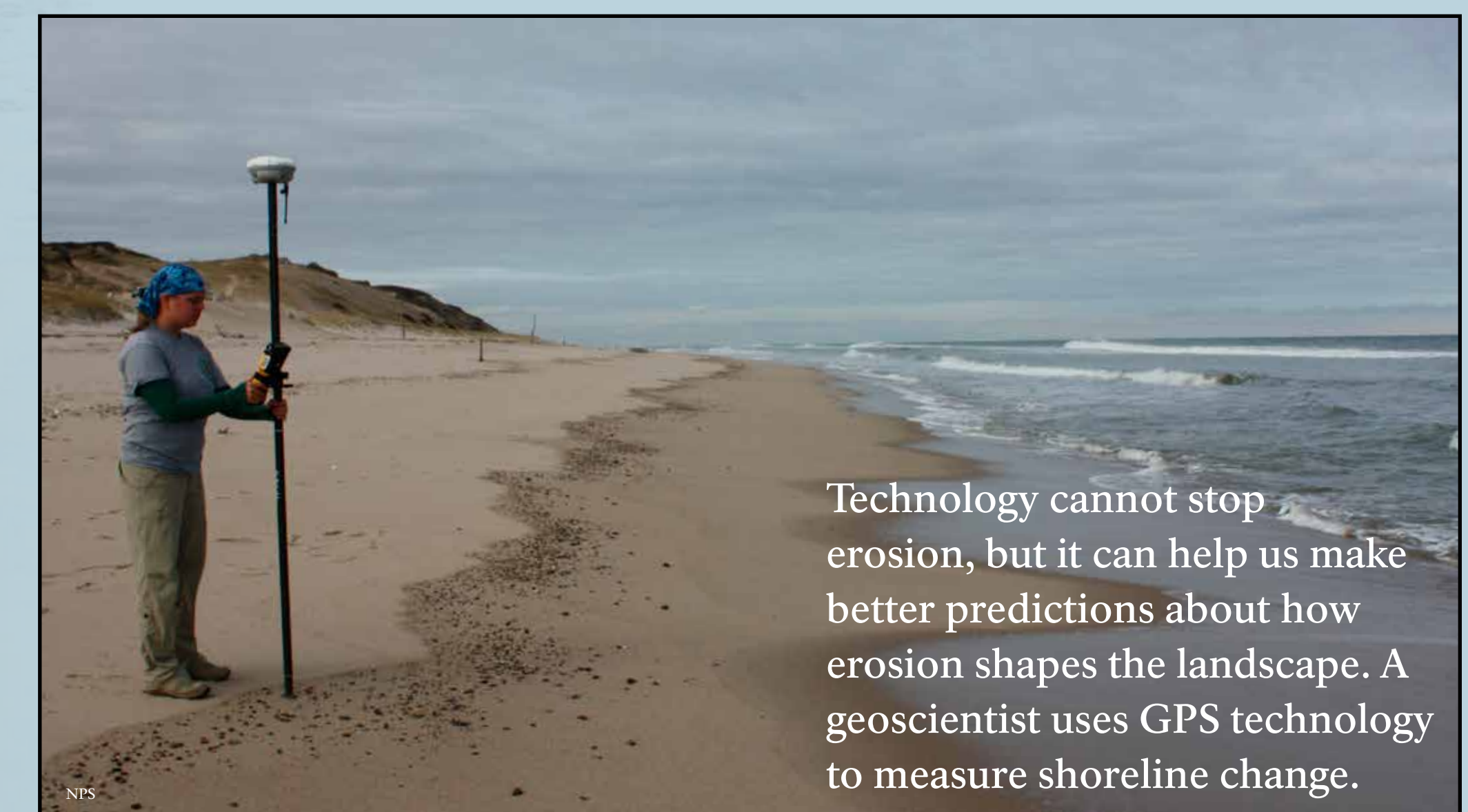
This photo from the 1920s shows how close the station towers were to the edge of the bluff. To avoid them toppling over the edge, they were cut down and used for firewood.

NPS/CHARLES F. ROLLINS



Cement slab from Marconi Station sliding down bluff, 1948.

NPS/FRED PARSONS



Technology cannot stop erosion, but it can help us make better predictions about how erosion shapes the landscape. A geoscientist uses GPS technology to measure shoreline change.

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